the weekly
Standard

MARCH 23, 2009 $4.95

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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It Looks So Natural No One Can Tell

As readers may have noticed, the media have a proprietary attitude toward Barack Obama: Having invested so much in his election, they may now be seen as protecting their investment. Or, in selected instances, holding Obama in their loving arms and gently cooing.

Take, for example, recent stories in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* which reveal that, since he announced his candidacy two years ago, President Obama has begun to show some telltale signs of gray in his hair, mostly around the ears. Of course, the fact that the president is in his 47th year might have something to do with it, but according to the press accounts it is clearly the crushing burden of the post-Bush presidency that is prematurely aging the current president.

Obviously, under these circumstances, there's only one thing to do, and as a service to this and future presidents, we offer these three examples of the ways in which veteran Washington politicos deal with gray hair. For this purpose we've recruited California's two U.S. senators, and a retired colleague from Kansas.

First, there's the Bob Dole route, which mandates that a legislator's hair look just as youthful as his face—but not too youthful. Notice how the darkness of Dole's dark, thinning locks diminishes slightly around the temples, which should fool any skeptics who suspect a dye job.

Dole, Boxer, Feinstein

Second, there's the Barbara Boxer option, which is to give the hair some unnatural color but highlight it creatively—alternating streaks of brown and not-so-brown—and poof it hourly to distract from the obvious dye job.

Finally, there's the Dianne Feinstein solution, which may be described as honest deception: There's no getting around the fact that Senator Feinstein is 75 years old, but has hair the color of brown shoe polish. It may look slightly ridiculous, and is unquestionably a dye job, but you have to admire the courage required to be seen in public with a head of hair that would do credit to a youthful Labrador Retriever.

Those, in The Scrapbook's view, are President Obama's three options. If he can't make up his mind, we should mention that Vice President Biden has years of experience to offer the White House. ♦

The 'Times' and Charles Freeman

If you didn't hear about the controversy surrounding the appointment of Charles Freeman to serve as head of the National Intelligence Council and his subsequent withdrawal from that post in the face of bipartisan opposition in Congress, it may be that you're not checking The Weekly Standard website often enough. It might also be because you're getting your news from the *New York Times*.

Even before Dennis Blair, Obama's director of national intelligence, officially appointed Freeman, the pick was sparking concern on a number of blogs. Freeman had run a think-tank that was largely funded through the generosity of the Saudi royal family. At the same time he'd offered over-the-top praise of the Saudi royals ("I believe King Abdullah is very rapidly becoming Abdullah the Great") and over-the-top criticism of Israel ("Demonstrably, Israel excels at war; sadly, it has shown no talent for peace"). Freeman also had financial ties to the People's Republic of China that, again, happened to coincide with a series of bizarre statements in defense of that regime's conduct ("[T]he Politburo's response to the mob scene at 'Tian'anmen' stands as a monument to overly cautious behavior on the part of the leadership, not as an example of rash action").

Freeman's statements and his financial ties to foreign authoritarian regimes caused considerable concern

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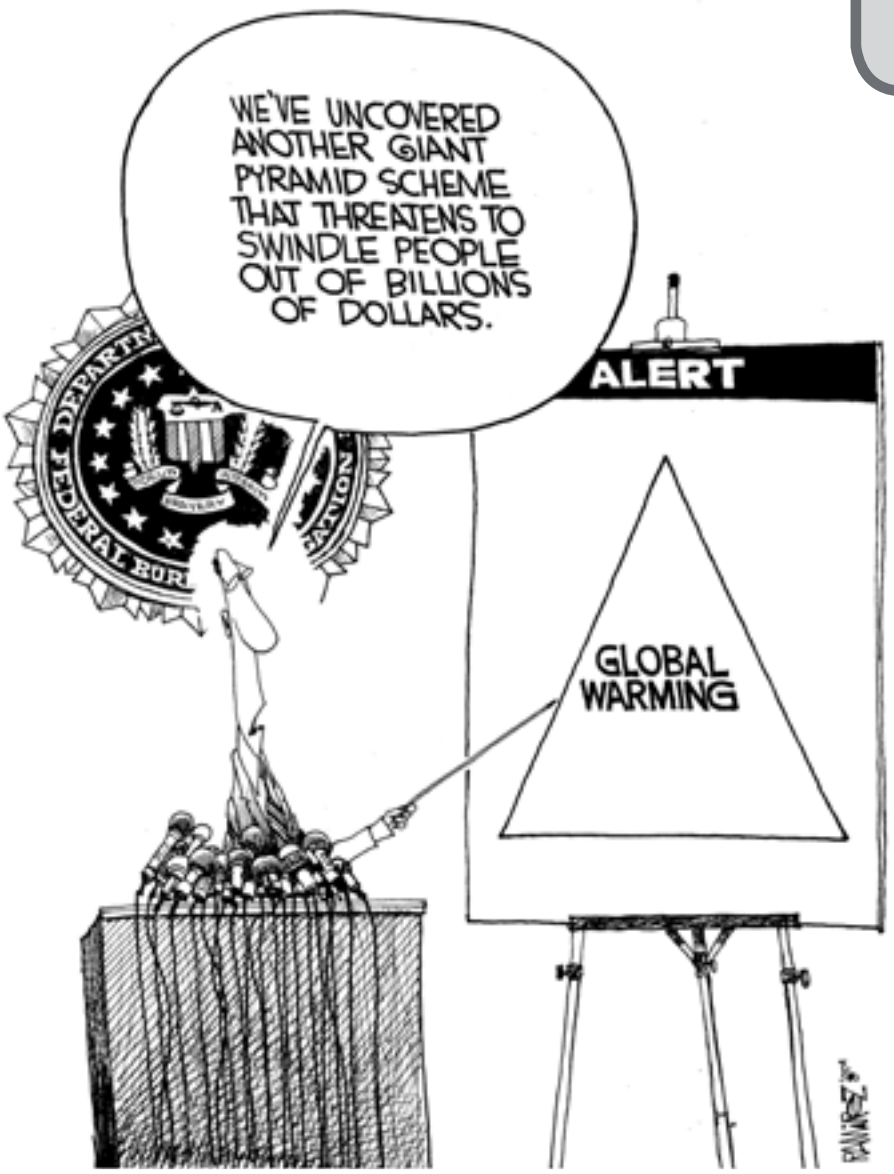

in Congress, where all seven Republicans on the Senate Select Intelligence Committee signed a letter to Blair making clear their objections, while Democrats like Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi were quietly letting the White House know of their displeasure with the pick.

Still, as all this played out, not a word appeared in the *New York Times* to indicate there was any kind of trouble. Ultimately the *Times* was forced to report to its readers the scuttling of another Obama appointment without ever having covered how that scuttling had come to pass. The next day the story appeared on the paper's front page. Readers were curious—how could Freeman's withdrawal have been front page news but his appointment and the controversy surrounding it not be worthy of any coverage at all?

The *Washington Post*'s Greg Sargent got one answer from *Times* editor Doug Jehl, who explained on Sargent's blog, "We did initially elect not to write a story about the campaign against Mr. Freeman. In deciding how to deploy our reporters, my initial judgment was that this squabble fell short of the bar, since the head of the National Intelligence Council is not a Senate-confirmable position, and it lies well below cabinet rank." (In fairness, the *Times* did have some of its best reporters—including Jodi Kantor—covering the critical "Michelle Obama Goes Sleeveless, Again" story.)

The *Politico*'s Michael Calderone got another answer. *Times* Washington bureau chief Dean Baquet told him that Freeman wasn't a "high enough appointment to go nuts over in a big way. . . . Go Google his predecessor and see how much coverage he got."

We did. The *Times* covered the appointment of Freeman's predecessor, Thomas Fingar, the day after the announcement was made—and we suspect that if there'd been a massive controversy about his ties to Red China, they would have covered that, too. ♦

Flush this Bill!

The next time you drive through the commonwealth of Virginia, you may want to think twice about downing that cup of coffee or Big Gulp. As a result of the downward economy, the state's lawmakers have proposed scrapping 25 of 41 highway rest areas, an idea that has more than a few concerned citizens hopping mad.

According to the *Roanoke Times*, Delegate Charles Poindexter called the proposal "silly, foolish, [and a] lack of common sense. If you have to go, you have to go. And that's what the people out in the country are saying right now." Not to mention the trucking industry, which refuses to take this sitting down.

As more and more complaints trickle in to Richmond, we hope the state's legislators have second thoughts and withdraw this plan. Otherwise, transportation officials may have more to worry about than the flow of traffic. ♦

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Casual

On the Road

There was a time in my life when I was skeptical that the ability to access the Internet on your cell phone could be of any possible use. That was before I got snarled in a giant traffic jam south of Waterbury, Connecticut, at 11 P.M. one night. For a while, my wife and I made the best of it, but eventually our spirits were broken. Slipping in and out of coherence, I began babbling about the Tappan Zee Bridge, which we had crossed a few hours before.

The Tappan Zee connects Nyack and Tarrytown, New York, and has two notable features: its length and a proliferation of telephone boxes along the span. Noting these oddities, I wondered aloud what kind of name "Tappan Zee" was. My wife grabbed my iPhone and looked it up on the Internet. Our car travels have never been the same.

The I-95 corridor is cluttered with bridges, tunnels, and rest stops named for people. Some of the honorees are familiar; many are not. The Tappan Zee, for instance, is named for the local Tappan Indians—but it was renamed the "Tappan Zee-Malcolm Wilson Bridge" in 1994, tacking on an undistinguished governor from the 1970s. While we were stuck in Waterbury, we learned all sorts of things about the bridge via the iPhone. For instance, quite a lot of people throw themselves off the Tappan Zee, so the telephones were put up to give potential suicides a last chance to call for counseling. Also, the bridge sits on one of the widest points of the Hudson, which the Dutch called a "*zee*" or sea. The location makes no engineering sense, but it does make political sense: Governor Tom Dewey chose a site outside the jurisdiction of the Port Authority.

We're now somewhat obsessed with learning about infrastructure names during our car rides. The Millard E. Tydings Bridge over the Susquehanna River is named for a Maryland Democrat who served in Congress from 1923 to 1951 and whose long Senate career ended in a feud with Joe McCarthy. The bridge was dedicated by President Kennedy on November 14, 1963. Eight days later, JFK was assassinated; so the following year the stretch of I-95 around the bridge was named for him.

HAL MAYFORTH

I'm pleased to report that my home state of New Jersey has the most edifying highway honorifics. Whereas most states name their infrastructure after free-spending (and almost always Democratic) politicians—think Major William Francis Deegan—New Jersey's bridges and rest stops are named for genuinely notable, and often overlooked, people.

For instance, most of the bridges connecting Jersey with Pennsylvania are named for familiar figures: Ben Franklin, Betsy Ross, Walt Whitman. But tucked away in South Jersey is the Commodore Barry Bridge. Barry was a hero of the Revolution, America's first commissioned naval officer. He won the final two naval battles of the war and put down three mutinies, before dying in Philadelphia in 1803. I think he'd like his bridge.

Even New Jersey's rest stops are thoughtfully dedicated. There are stops named for Thomas Edison and Alexander Hamilton, Woodrow Wilson, and Grover Cleveland. But there are also stops named for the 19th-century novelist James Fenimore Cooper and the Catholic poet Joyce Kilmer.

Another service center is named for Richard Stockton. One of Washington's closer friends, Stockton was a moderate who initially sought a compromise between the colonies and the crown. When it became clear that no compromise was possible, he joined the move for independence. In 1776, he was elected to the Second Continental Congress and became the first New Jerseyan to sign the Declaration. Later that year Stockton was captured by the king's army and offered amnesty if he would but renounce the revolution. Stockton refused.

He was thrown into a New York prison, where brutal treatment wrecked him. Cornwallis moved into his Princeton estate; all of his possessions were plundered by the British. Eventually, Washington arranged a prisoner exchange and Stockton was released, his honor intact but his body, estate, and fortune in ruins. He languished and died in 1781.

In all my years in New Jersey schools, I never heard of Richard Stockton, apart from seeing his name on that rest stop on the turnpike. You would think that some stray teacher or textbook might have mentioned him along the way. Alas, poor Richard never made the cut. There was always one more unit to cram in about Harriet Tubman or the Lenape Indians, about either of whom, I feel reasonably confident, I could still write a 2,000 word disquisition if pressed.

It seems almost grotesque to name a rest stop for such a man. Stockton's heroism deserves more than a place where travelers pause for day-old Sbarro and a bathroom. But I suppose it's better than nothing.

Jonathan V. Last

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the weekly Standard

Never Allow a Democratic Administration To Go To Waste

"Rule one: Never allow a crisis to go to waste," chief-of-staff-designate Rahm Emanuel told the *New York Times* the Sunday after Barack Obama's election. "They are opportunities to do big things."

Emanuel deserves points for candor. But perhaps not for perspicacity. His assumption was that the economic crisis was and would remain Bush's crisis and that the opportunities were and would remain Obama's opportunities. But what if the crisis becomes Obama's crisis? Then the opportunities can be Republican opportunities.

The first two months of the Age of Obama haven't turned out quite the way Emanuel and Obama's legions hoped and expected. The early momentum is flagging. The effort to rush through big-government liberal policies, as somehow part of a response to a financial crisis he's not actually addressing effectively, may backfire. Several of his nominations and appointments have had to be withdrawn, and others should have been.

Meanwhile, the GOP recovery program is going pretty well. Republicans have progressed from shell-shocked timidity through small-bore sniping and onto robust (and responsible) opposition. The GOP has shown itself able to stand up and counter Obama's arguments. The Bush hangover seems to be proving less burdensome than expected, and some of the GOP's members of Congress are turning out to be more presentable than suspected. Organizing in opposition to Obama's onerous cap-and-trade energy proposal, his attempted government takeover of health care, his attempt to eliminate the secret ballot in union elections, and his tax increases is proceeding apace, and holds out reasonable prospects for success.

But beyond organizing for opposition to the Obama administration (and granting support to it, of course, where appropriate), the GOP should begin looking for opportunities. Opportunities to think anew about big issues, such as how to organize and regulate the financial markets, and opportunities to advance smaller initiatives. In the Carter years, the Republican minority in Congress—and conservative thinkers and activists outside—debunked the president's fecklessness and exposed liberalism's failures. They resisted policies that deserved to be resisted, but also developed a broad new agenda and advanced many smaller initiatives—some of them actually becoming law over a reluctant Carter's signature—consistent with that agenda.

It's not too early for Republicans and conservatives to start to try to take advantage of the opportunities facing them. Here are two small examples, among many.

First, Obama is, for PR reasons and PR reasons only (and not very good PR reasons at that), committed to closing Guantánamo. GOP members of Congress can make clear just how dangerous the remaining Guantánamo detainees are, and how irresponsible are some of the proposals for sending them abroad or trying them in the criminal justice system. The GOP should seek the release of the Defense Department report on terrorist acts by some of the less dangerous detainees released from Guantánamo under the Bush administration. Republicans can seek to slow or reverse Obama's decision, requiring that he certify that closing Guantánamo will not endanger American lives, providing funding for Guantánamo in the budget whether or not Obama wants it, and so forth. Lots of Democrats would have trouble opposing such efforts.

Second, what's now the rationale for discriminating against ROTC on elite college campuses? The "Don't ask, don't tell" policy? Well, Obama is president and the Democrats control Congress. They can change that policy if they want to. Meanwhile, the military and those students who want to serve their country are punished. Obama is himself on record favoring the readmission of ROTC to campuses. As graduation season approaches, shouldn't Republicans in Congress push President Obama to pressure his academic buddies to move on this? Wouldn't a lot of Democrats want to join such an effort?

There's no shortage of opportunities, on matters big and small, for conservatives and Republicans to go on the offensive and to do so in ways that split liberals and Democrats. Republicans aren't going to govern for the next few years. But they shouldn't assume they'll be powerless or that they're required only to play defense.

So rule one for Republicans and conservatives: Never allow a Democratic administration to go to waste. It's an opportunity to do big things—to regain the political and intellectual offensive on various fronts, and to set the predicate both for returning to power and for doing big things upon recapturing the presidency.

—*William Kristol*

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Stem Cell Sham

The president as sophist.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

JASON SEILER

When a Democratic president goes from being wrong to being damn wrong is always an interesting moment: Bay of Pigs, Great Society, Jimmy Carter waking up on the morning after his inauguration, HillaryCare. Barack Obama condemned himself (and a number of human embryos to be determined at a later date) on March 9 when he signed an executive order reversing the Bush administration's restrictions on federal funding of stem cell research.

President Obama went to hell not with the stroke of a pen, but with the cluck of a tongue. His executive order was an error. His statement at the executive order signing ceremony was a mortal error: "In recent years, when it comes to stem cell research, rather than furthering discovery, our government has forced what I believe is a false choice between sound science and moral values."

A false choice is no choice at all—Tweedledee/Tweedledum, Chevy Suburban/GMC Yukon XL, Joe Biden/Triumph the Insult Comic Dog. Is there really no difference "between sound science and moral values"? *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* states that *science* is, definition one, "possession of knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding."

Let's look at the various things science has "known" in the past 3,000 years.

Lightning is the sneeze of Thor.

The periodic table consists of Earth, Wind, and Fire and a recording of "Got To Get You into My Life."

The world is flat with signs saying "Here Be Democrats" near the edges.

You can turn lead into gold without first selling your Citibank stock at a huge loss.

We're the center of the universe and the Sun revolves around us (and shines out of Uranus, Mr. President, if I may be allowed a moment of utter sophomoricism).

But, lest anyone think I'm not serious, let me quote with serious revulsion the following passages from the 11th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1911)—that great compendium of all the knowledge science possessed, carefully distinguished from ignorance and misunderstanding, as of a hundred years ago:

> [T]he negro would appear to stand on a lower evolutionary plane than the white man, and to be more closely related to the highest anthropoids.
>
> Mentally the negro is inferior to the white.
>
> [A]fter puberty sexual matters take the first place in the negro's life and thought.

P.J. O'Rourke is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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The above are quoted—*not* out of context—from the article titled "Negro" written by Dr. Walter Francis Willcox, chief statistician of the U.S. Census Bureau and professor of social science and statistics at Cornell. I trust I've made my point.

Now let's look at the things morality has known. The Ten Commandments are holding up pretty well. I suppose the "graven image" bit could be considered culturally insensitive. But the moralists got nine out of ten—a lot better than the scientists are doing. (And, to digress, the Obama administration should take an extra look at the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," before going into nonkosher pork production with redistributive tax and spend policies.)

A false choice means there's no choosing. The president of the United States tells us that sound science and moral values are united, in bed together. As many a coed has been assured, "Let's just get naked under the covers, we don't have to make love." Or, as the president puts it, "Many thoughtful and decent people are conflicted about, or strongly oppose this research. And I understand their concerns, and I believe that we must respect their point of view."

Mr. President, sir, if this is your respect, I'd rather have your contempt or your waistline or something other than what you're giving me here. The more so because in the next sentence you say,

> But after much discussion, debate and reflection, the proper course has become clear. The majority of Americans—from across the political spectrum, and of all backgrounds and beliefs—have come to a consensus that we should pursue this research.

Mr. President, you're lying. There is no consensus. And you are not only wrong about the relationship between facts and morals, you are wrong about the facts of democracy. In America we have a process called voting—I seem to remember you were once very interested in it. We the citizens determine whether and how to spend the proceeds of taxation, which we alone are empowered to impose upon ourselves through our elected representatives in Congress, not the White House. If you want to kill little, bitty babies, get Congress to pass a law to kill little, bitty babies, if you can. I'm not going to bother arguing with you about whether it's wrong. Surely you too gazed at the sonogram screen and saw a thumb-sized daughter tumbling in the womb, having the time of her life. And a short life it will be, in a Petri dish. But we've already established that you don't know wrong from right.

The question is not about federal funding for stem cell research, the question is are you a knave or a fool? I'm inclined to take the more charitable view. For one thing you have a foolish notion that science does not progress without the assistance of government.

A false choice is no choice at all—Tweedledee/Tweedledum, Chevy Suburban/GMC Yukon XL, Joe Biden/Triumph the Insult Comic Dog.

Philosophy was once considered science. After Alexander the Great had accepted the surrender of Athens, he found Diogenes the Cynic living in a barrel.

"What can I do for you?" Alexander asked.

"Get out of my light," Diogenes said.

On the other hand, you, Mr. President, said that scientific progress "result from painstaking and costly research, from years of lonely trial and error, much of which never bears fruit, and from a government willing to support that work."

Thus it was that without King George's courtiers winding kite string for Ben Franklin and splitting firewood and flipping eye charts to advance his painstaking and costly research into electricity, stoves, and bifocals, Ben's years of lonely trial and error never would have borne fruit. To this day we would think the bright flash in a stormy summer sky is God having an allergy attack. We would heat our homes by burning piles of pithy sayings from *Poor Richard's Almanac* in the middle of the floor. And we would stare at our knitting through the bottoms of old Coke bottles.

We'd probably have telephones and light bulbs if President Rutherford B. Hayes (a Republican) had been willing to support the work of Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison. As you say, Mr. President, "When government fails to make these investments, opportunities are missed." (Although the light bulbs would now have to be replaced by flickering, squiggly fluorescent devices anyway, to reverse global warming.)

Also, Mr. President, you make a piss poor argument in favor of embarking on what you yourself admit is an uncertain course of action. You say, "At this moment, the full promise of stem cell research remains unknown, and it should not be overstated." And you find it necessary to say, "I can also promise you that we will never undertake this research lightly."

As your reasons for this research—which we are to perform with heavy hearts—you name a few misty hopes: "to regenerate a severed spinal cord," "lift someone from a wheelchair," "spare a child from a lifetime of needles." Then you undercut yourself by introducing a whole new fear. "And we will ensure that our government never opens the door to the use of cloning for human reproduction. It is dangerous, profoundly wrong, and has no place in our society." Because cloning cells to make a human life is so much worse than cloning cells from a human life that's already been destroyed. Why, it's as dangerous, as profoundly wrong, and has as little place in our society as being pro-life.

Mr. President, any high school debate team could do better. Even debate teams from those terrible inner-city public high schools that your ideology demands that you champion no matter how little knowledge they provide. And I particularly enjoyed the part of your speech where you said that "we make decisions based on facts, not ideology." ♦

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Young President in a Hurry

Why Obama wants to move fast.

BY FRED BARNES

President Obama must be irked. The media and other Obama allies like Warren Buffett are on his case for the first time, insisting he's in too big a hurry to enact his entire domestic agenda. Obama should slow down, they say. He should prioritize. He should focus on reviving the economy and nothing else, and leave other issues—health care, energy, education—for later. The president has spurned this advice.

Obama is right. His agenda is grandiose, but his strategy for achieving it makes sense. Since he has a fair chance of getting nearly everything he wants, why not go for it now?

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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The president and his aides believe any new administration in similar circumstances would do the same. Right again. Proceeding prudently, taking up issues one at a time, would reduce the odds of success. For a new president, later is harder.

The White House strategy has dictated the Republican strategy: slow-walk the process. No one understands this better than Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell. He's joined the chorus urging Obama to pull back. There's "ample time" later, he said last week, to deal with issues "that have no relation whatsoever" to rejuvenating the economy.

The president, contrary to his reputation as the smartest guy in town, doesn't seem to realize how important his own strategy really is. He acts as though he's not subject to the normal rules of politics and thus, for him, success is inevitable. It's not. The rules do apply and have, in fact, begun to affect him adversely. He needs to make haste.

Obama has two great political assets: his popularity and the large Democratic majorities in the Senate and House. The more popular a president and the bigger his party's majorities, the better his prospects for winning approval of his agenda. Seems obvious, doesn't it? The best example: Lyndon Johnson in 1965, when his Great Society programs became the law of the land. (They still are.)

Like earlier presidents, Obama is slipping in popularity, as measured by job approval, as his first year progresses. At 63 percent approval, he's roughly where George W. Bush was at this point in his presidency in 2001, but behind JFK, Eisenhower, Carter, LBJ, and Nixon. Pollster Scott Rasmussen has noted a sharp rise in those who "strongly disapprove" of Obama's performance and a dip in those who "strongly approve."

Until the economy shows signs of recovery, Obama's popularity is likely to decline further. And Larry Summers, Obama's top economic adviser, says "no one knows just when" a rebound will begin. Many economists, for what it's worth, don't expect signs of recovery until next year.

That's probably too late to spare Democrats from losing a number of House seats and maybe even several Senate seats in the 2010 midterm elections. Assuming the economy remains stagnant, or worsens, and Obama loses popularity, Democrats are bound to grow queasy about facing the voters. Many of them won't look kindly on the president's agenda.

So it's small wonder that House speaker Nancy Pelosi is not only a strong advocate of the get-everything-now strategy, she would enlarge the agenda. Rather than wait until 2011 for the Bush tax cuts to expire, Pelosi recommended raising tax rates for the upper middle class and wealthy now.

She lost that argument, but she usually gets her way. Pelosi instructed Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid last week to make sure the Senate passed an "omnibus" spending bill identical to the House's version. Reid complied, allowing the measure to get Obama's signature quickly. Earlier, after she had rebuffed Republican efforts to compromise on the economic "stimulus" package, Obama explained to a frustrated Republican that Pelosi just didn't have time for bipartisanship.

There are two other reasons—ones Obama may not be aware of—why he should be in a hurry. He doesn't have a mandate or anything close to it. True, he brought up the liberal initiatives now encased in his budget during the campaign last year. But they were little more than talking points, not his core message of change, unity,

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and uprooting the way Washington does business.

The public reaction to Obama's agenda has been tepid. Only a bit more than one-third of Americans believe the stimulus will boost the economy. His $3.6 trillion budget is viewed more unfavorably (46 percent) than favorably (41 percent) in a Rasmussen survey. And the threat of global warming, a major element of Obama's rationale for restricting carbon emissions, is increasingly seen as exaggerated.

The other reason for moving swiftly is ideological. Obama is trying to impose extremely liberal policies on an electorate that identifies itself—78 percent in the Election Day exit poll last November—as either conservative or moderate. Liberals argue the public has been radicalized by the economic slump. Maybe some folks have, but it's hardly a mass phenomenon.

So Obama needs to push his agenda through Congress before the public discovers what he's up to. Time is not on his side. Moderate Democrats aren't a tough breed, but they've begun to question many of Obama's policies. They don't strike fear in Pelosi's heart. But if their ranks swell, they could cause trouble for her, Reid, and especially Obama.

Republicans won't want to hear this, but the model for Obama's strategy is Ronald Reagan. When Reagan took office, he faced a deteriorating economy, and his popularity fell rapidly. Then 10 weeks into his presidency, he was wounded in an assassination attempt. His popularity increased, helping him to gain approval of his basic agenda of spending and tax cuts and a budget that funded a significant military buildup.

By September of his first year, Reagan's approval rating had fallen 15 points from its high, as unemployment soared. It's not farfetched to suspect Obama might also suffer a serious fall in popularity. All the more reason for Obama to get everything he can as soon as he can. And reason enough for Republicans to bog him down. ♦

The Shame of the Senate

Fifty-eight pols to inner-city kids: Drop dead.

BY MARY KATHERINE HAM

The porch light is on at a modest townhouse in Northeast D.C. Inside, there's a strategy session that looks nothing like the ones held behind the closed doors of Congress. School-choice activist Virginia Walden-Ford is chatting with her sister and local parents. A little girl is perched on the arm of an overstuffed chair, watching *American Idol*. A troop of boys clatters down the narrow stairway, spilling into the living room and scattering shoes and action figures in the process. Conversation seamlessly stops and starts amid questions for moms or hugs for "Miss Virginia," as the kids call her.

Richard, an 8-year-old who looks 6 but sounds 26, attends the Preparatory School on an Opportunity Scholarship. Almost completely hidden by the podium, he entreated Congress to do what was right, occasionally reaching up to pound his fist for emphasis.

"I fight for these children," says Walden-Ford. "And I will fight till I die. People think I'm saying that lightly, and I'm not. I will fight till I can't fight anymore because I feel these kids deserve this program."

Mary Katharine Ham is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Miss Virginia is the voice of school choice in Washington, D.C. She fought for years for the Opportunity Scholarship, a pilot school-choice program that serves 1,700 District kids from families with an average annual income of $23,000. It passed the Republican-controlled Senate in 2004, but only by two votes and after Walden-Ford spent months shuttling parents and kids to Capitol Hill every day, to the offices of the encouraging and the intractable alike.

The program has produced an Archbishop Carroll High School valedictorian, four years of positive reviews in a Georgetown University study of attitudes about the program, and a perennially high demand for scholarships. Yet success wasn't enough to keep the program safe in a Democrat-controlled Congress.

The Opportunity Scholarship's $14 million in yearly funding was nixed last week by Senator Dick Durbin, who inserted language in the $410 billion omnibus spending bill to sunset the program at the end of the next school year. On the Senate floor, he and ally Chuck Schumer attributed their action to a newfound interest in evaluating federal programs for effectiveness. Neither mentioned that Durbin counts the National Education Association among his top 10 lifetime contributors. Nor did they mention that Head Start, a federal pre-K education program, which has yet to present the evaluation required by its 1998 reauthorization, was nonetheless funded to the tune of $7 billion in the same bill.

"I had hoped that the successes of these kids would just speak for themselves," Walden-Ford says, the moms in the room shaking their heads in

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Richard Holassie discusses his support for the voucher program with Arizona senator John Kyl at a press conference on the Hill.

ERICA SUARES

somber agreement as the room turned serious. "I can't even imagine telling these kids they have to go back to public schools."

Nevada Republican John Ensign offered an amendment to strike the Durbin language, but it was predictably defeated, 58-39. Now, school-choice supporters' only hope is a reauthorization vote. (The program must also be approved by the D.C. City Council, another obstacle built into Durbin's language.)

The battle will not be easy in a Democratic Congress, but there's some reason to be optimistic, says Andrew Campanella, a spokesman for Alliance for School Choice. "Support is definitely building," he said. "The fight is not over."

Though she voted against Ensign's amendment, Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein spoke forcefully in favor of school choice, saying it's important for revamping education.

"I don't believe youngsters from lower income families should be denied the opportunity to learn in these smaller, more personal settings," Feinstein said. "I believe we need different models for children to learn."

Feinstein, who voted for the program in 2004, was encouraged by a letter from D.C. mayor Adrian Fenty, who supports keeping the Opportunity Scholarship, as does Obama's secretary of education, Arne Duncan. (Both are generally ambivalent about vouchers.)

This spring, the Department of Education is set to release the final study in a series on the D.C. scholarships. Previous evaluations have shown improvement for subgroups in math and science, when compared with public-school peers, and significant improvement in parental satisfaction. Activists predict similar results this spring, and insist they will force Senate Democrats to follow through on their fact-finding instead of letting the program slowly drown in the seas of Senate procedure.

Patricia William is one parent who found satisfaction in a private school after her son, Fransoir, 12, struggled with large class sizes in public schools. A naturalized citizen from El Salvador and a nurse's assistant, she was riding the bus one morning, fretting about Fransoir's last bad school day, when she saw an ad for the scholarship.

"I got kind of sentimental, but I didn't want people to see me cry," William says. "I just wrote it down."

Fransoir William got a scholarship to attend Sacred Heart, and the changes in him were almost immediate, his mother says. "He would come home and say, 'Mommy, they really make time for me,'" William said. "I thought it would be his journey, but it was ours. Because when he's okay, I'm okay."

This week, Fransoir spoke at his first press conference, delivering a short speech in support of Ensign's amendment.

Such stories are not uncommon as families believe the scholarship means a salvation they could never otherwise afford. Ronald Holassie, a junior at Archbishop Carroll who would return to public schools for his senior year if funding runs out, speaks passionately for the program, with almost a hint of pleading: "It must continue. It must."

It's the stories and preternatural poise of students like Fransoir and Ronald Holassie's brother, Richard, that Walden-Ford is counting on to sway the Senate.

Richard, an 8-year-old who looks 6 but sounds 26, attends the Preparatory School on an Opportunity Scholarship. He spoke off-the-cuff at the press conference. Almost completely hidden by the podium, he entreated Congress to do what was right, occasionally reaching up to pound his fist for emphasis before concluding, "Does anyone have any questions for me?"

When I interviewed him later at Walden-Ford's house, he was equally confident, but his soliloquies also revealed the harsh realities D.C. public-school kids face. He transitions with tragic ease from the relative merits of portable video games to the time "three kids got shot" near the neighborhood school.

Safety was what Walden-Ford was looking for when she began her fight for school choice in 1997 to help her youngest son, William. His portrait hangs in the living room—a resolute Marine in dress blues, who has been to Iraq and back—as a reminder of her fight's importance.

"When I look at my son, and I think about what could have been," she says, trailing off. "I try not to think about that a lot, but he is such

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a fine young man." A private scholarship for William to attend Archbishop Carroll, provided by a man who had left the neighborhood and wanted to give back, was the best thing that ever happened to her family, Walden-Ford says. He was one of the few boys in the neighborhood who got out. Those who stayed invariably got into drugs or went to jail. Acting "too smart" in school was a particular invitation to abuse.

Walden-Ford wishes another recipient of a private scholarship would help her save the D.C. program: Barack Obama, who attended the prestigious Punahou School in Hawaii on scholarship. But Walden-Ford is skeptical that he'll make a stand for the scholarship.

"This has got nothing to do with children. It's about teachers' unions and special-interest groups," she says. "I'm concerned that he won't say it because he's controlled by the same people other Democrats are controlled by. I think it's difficult for him to say it. I hope and pray he does."

Jordan White, 17, who attends the Georgetown Day School on an Opportunity Scholarship, is more hopeful.

"From what I gather from a lot of his speeches, he cares about everyone having a chance to . . . educate themselves in a place where they'll be able to go as far as they can in life," she says. "If that's what the scholarship is doing, I don't see why he would oppose it."

Before leaving Walden-Ford's house, Richard grabs my arm.

"We need to talk about this scholarship again. It's important," he says before launching into his plan. "Remember how Miss Virginia said it? You have to fight for [the scholarship]. That's why I'm trying to fight for it. My momma's trying to fight for it. Even Batman's trying to fight for it!"

And, with that, Richard led the parade of families into the winter evening, bounding down Miss Virginia's scuffed-up steps, just as William had done years before him, determined to find allies in a sometimes unfriendly city, to fight alongside him and Batman. ♦

Gulf Scream

Fear and loathing in Riyadh—of Tehran

BY OLIVIER GUITTA

A few weeks ago, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader called Bahrain Iran's 14th province. Not only did Bahrain react indignantly, but—more important—so did Saudi Arabia. For, even as a potential conflict between Iran and Israel grabs headlines, tensions have been building between Tehran and Riyadh. The Saudis fear both Iran's nuclear program and its expansionist agenda.

And that's not all. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 launched a far-reaching competition between Shiite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia for control of Islam and the *ummah*, the worldwide community of Muslims. Since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president, Iran has increased its expenditure of money, energy, and time on proselytizing populations, from Africa to the Gulf.

Saudi Arabia, more than any other Sunni country, feels threatened by this new wave of Shiite proselytizing. Saudi social affairs minister Abdel Mohsen al Hakas has called it unacceptable, and King Abdullah himself has accused Shiites of trying to convert Sunnis, pointing the finger at Tehran. The matter is of vital concern to the kingdom, which prizes its position as the cradle of Islam—all the more since Ahmadinejad and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah are now among the most popular figures in the Arab world.

Iran's expansionist strategy is not limited to religious affairs. Hundreds of Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah fighters who got their military training in Iran have infiltrated the Gulf since last year in order to "militarize" the Shiite communities of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. Their mission is to prepare to destabilize these monarchies, targeting vital national interests and Western interests (both embassies and businesses) in the event of a U.S. or Israeli military strike against Iran.

Citing "British sources," the Kuwaiti daily *Al Seyassah* reported in September:

> European intelligence services have located at least 450 Lebanese Shiite fighters who have already visited the Gulf between January and July 2008, often using false passports, from Lebanon or from Syria, Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt. Others were able to move directly from Iraq to Kuwait and the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, which is predominantly Shiite. Lebanese immigrants in these countries allegedly confirmed the presence of these agents, and have reported them to the authorities.

The situation is all the more tense in that Saudi Arabia is convinced that Iran is a threat to the Saudi regime. King Abdullah sternly warned Ahmadinejad during the latter's visit to Riyadh in 2007, "We welcome cooperation and investment, but we will not tolerate interference in internal affairs."

In fact, the kingdom's Shiite minority, about 10 percent of the population, is concentrated in the oil-rich eastern region of the country. The regime cannot afford a rebellion or terror attacks there. In 2007, to protect its oil installations, Riyadh created a 35,000-man specialized security force.

While Saudi Shiites remain cautious, they are nonetheless listening to their Iranian big brother and may be ready to contest their second-class citizenship. In December, clashes

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erupted in the Saudi province of Al-Qatif between the police and Shiite demonstrators responding to Hezbollah's call to support the Palestinians in Gaza. And on February 23, violence broke out in Medina between Shiite and Sunni worshippers.

Iran is threatening Riyadh, moreover, not only by playing the Shiite card, but also by playing the terrorism card. Tehran helps various arms of al Qaeda with funding, supplies, training, and sanctuary, and al Qaeda is a deadly enemy of the Saudi regime.

Thus, some Saudi prisoners who belong to Al Qaeda in Iraq have confessed that they were trained in camps supervised by the Al Quds Brigades, a special branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. In Lebanon, some Saudi terrorists from the al Qaeda-linked Palestinian group Fatah al-Islam, which is supported by Syria and fought the Lebanese army in 2007, entered Lebanon via Iran. Among them was a high level target, Abdallah Al Bichi, one of al Qaeda's religious theorists, who had been living in Iran.

Finally, close to 40 percent of the 85 terrorists on Riyadh's "most wanted" list are based in Iran, having entered the Islamic republic just in the past six months. Of the 85, 83 are Saudis and 2 Yemenis. In a country as controlled as Iran, it is inconceivable that the regime is not complicit in hosting these men, most of them affiliated with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, whose goal is the overthrow of the Saudi monarchy.

To counter Iran, Saudi Arabia has built a Sunni axis, cultivating relations with the six Gulf monarchies (though Qatar is wobbly), Jordan, and Egypt. This development was supported by the Bush administration and even implicitly by Israel. (High-level "secret" meetings between Saudis and Israelis have taken place since 2006, and it is not by chance that Riyadh publicly supported Jerusalem in its war against Hezbollah in the summer of 2006.)

At this point though, the Saudis are concerned about the Obama administration's overtures to Iran and are afraid that a deal will be done to their detriment. Hence the Saudi diplomatic offensive to rally support in the region. Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal recently exhorted his Arab counterparts to stand up to Iran's regional and nuclear ambitions. And Riyadh is courting Iran's main ally in the Middle East, Syria, in the hope of isolating Tehran: The March 11 meeting in Riyadh between King Abdullah and Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, along with the heads of state of Egypt and Kuwait, suggested a rapprochement.

Tehran's two-pronged strategy of military/terrorist expansion and Shiite proselytizing is aimed at controlling the Gulf, and Saudi Arabia is seeking to defend itself, both physically and spiritually. Riyadh's jitters are a reminder that the Iranian regime remains a source of concern not just in Western capitals but also in large portions of the Muslim world. ♦

Dirt Poor in the Workers' Paradise

Eighty-four percent of Cuba's food is imported.

BY BLAKE HURST

New Year's Day marked the fiftieth anniversary of Castro's takeover in Cuba. From political prisons to firing squads to Russian missiles, his regime has been a disaster. Yet today people hold up the Cuban food system as a model for the rest of the world.

Sustainable, largely organic, community-based, and healthy food production in post-Soviet Cuba is offered by critics of "industrial agriculture" as an example of the sort of system that we should aspire to in the United States. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Soviet subsidies for Cuba's sugar industry in the early 1990s, a near famine forced Cubans to radically change what they consumed and the manner in which it was produced. By 1993, per capita calorie consumption in Cuba had been cut by a third from the Soviet-subsidized level.

Cuba loosened restrictions on private production of food, moved from export crops to staple production, and learned how to survive without subsidies. And to hear environmentalist Bill McKibben tell the story, the island has become a sort of tropical paradise for "foodies." Community gardens, organic production, even plowing with oxen—Cuban agriculture is sustainable, and Cubans are happy indeed with their lot as small farmers. Compost, beneficial insects, urban gardens, farmer's markets "stacked deep with shiny heaps of bananas and dried beans, mangoes and tomatoes": McKibben has seen paradise, and reported on it in both his book *Deep Economy* (2007) and a long article in *Harper's* magazine.

Lydia Zepeda drew many of the same conclusions. Writing in *Choices* magazine, a journal focusing on agricultural economics, in 2003, she describes with breathless awe the changes in Cuban agriculture, including the transfer of much land to cooperatives "*rent free*" (emphasis hers). Except for the production quotas owed to the state in perpetuity. Farmers can even sell their excess production in farmers' markets.

According to Zepeda, "agroecol-

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ogy" is the new emphasis in agricultural research. And the results have been outstanding. Vegetable production quadrupled between 1994 and 1997; bean, potato, and citrus production increased by huge amounts as well. Lacking fuel for machinery, farmers are using some 150,000 oxen to till their ground. This is good for soil structure, according to Zepeda, since animals weigh less than tractors. By the time her article was published, calorie consumption in Cuba was still less than the minimum recommended by the World Health Organization, but some things are worth other people being hungry for, and "sustainable agriculture" is one of them.

Paul Roberts is another writer who finds much to admire in Cuba. His book *The End of Food* (2008) is a paean to the banishing of the evil tractor and the awful fertilizer, the wonderful diversity, the docile oxen chewing their cud, the peasants happily hoeing as peasants ought to do. Roberts quotes McKibben to the effect that this concentration on labor-intensive agriculture is a wee bit more possible in a police state than it would be elsewhere. After all, Cuba had lots of excess labor and the ability to move it where it was needed without too many scruples. An important point. Roberts is wistfully aware that we are unlikely to adopt such a food system here, but points out hopefully that we might have to, if we run out of oil or productive soil or experience some other catastrophic failure. And we might be forced to use a stethoscope instead of an MRI, if the same worries about modernity were applied to our medical system as are projected upon farming.

Cuban agriculture in the age of the USSR was crazy. The Soviets sold Cuba fertilizer at below-market prices, with which to raise sugar—on inefficient, irrational, ideologically correct collective farms—that Cuba then sold back to the Soviets at above-market prices. The improvements since the end of the Soviet era have come not because a sense of community has been engendered by the necessity of adapting premodern kinds of farming, but because market incentives are sneaking in around the edges of a moribund and cruel system.

NEWSCOM

Cuban agriculture, 2008

Even so, promoters of present-day Cuba tend to gloss over a few facts. Like the fact that the ration coupons allow for only about half of the needed calories and that agriculture is so inefficient that Cubans spend about 50 to 70 percent of their gross income supplementing the food available through the state system. More than a quarter of the Cuban work force is, moreover, involved in agriculture.

A recent article in the Cuban press, noted in a study by the USDA's Office of Global Analysis, quoted a high-level Cuban ministry of agriculture official who revealed that 84 percent of all food consumed in Cuba is imported. CNN reports that Raúl Castro is moving to boost food production by putting more land under the control of private farmers. State-run television claims that half of all agricultural land in Cuba is not farmed or is farmed in an unproductive manner. According to CNN, "A thorny bush called marabu fills many of the unused fields and has become a symbol for the failure of agriculture. Last year, Raúl Castro himself bitterly joked about how much of it he could see along the highway."

So, according to American visitors, the symbols of Cuban agriculture are full markets and happy farmers tilling their urban plots of organic vegetables. According to the Cubans themselves, the symbol is the marabu bush. The U.S. embargo against Cuba has been loosened, and food imports from the United States have been increasing rapidly. If you are going to have a sustainable agricultural paradise, it helps to have a nearby neighbor with a million or so industrial farmers. ♦

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Yes, We Can

In the 'graveyard of empires,' we are fighting a war we can win.

By Max Boot, Frederick W. Kagan & Kimberly Kagan

Kandahar

If you believe the headlines, Afghanistan is "the graveyard of empires," a "quagmire" and a "fiasco," the place where President Barack Obama will meet his "Vietnam." In the media's imagination, the Taliban are on the march, and Kabul is on the verge of falling to a resurgent insurgency that already controls much of the countryside. Increasing numbers of voices, on both the left and the right, counsel that the war is unwinnable and that we need to radically "downsize" our objectives in order to salvage something from a failing war effort lest we go the way of the Russians or British, previous conquerors who foundered in this merciless land of violence and fanaticism.

Evidence to support the pessimists isn't hard to find. Violence has increased every year since 2001. The United Nations recently reported that there was an especially big jump last year, with civilian deaths up nearly 40 percent, from 1,523 in 2007 to 2,118 in 2008. Coalition deaths were up 27 percent, rising to 294 in 2008 from 232 in 2007. Because of the improving situation in Iraq, there have been a number of months when more U.S. soldiers have died in Afghanistan. Meanwhile the number of Afghans surveyed by ABC, the BBC, and the German network ARD who said that their country was headed in the right direction fell to 40 percent, down from 54 percent in 2007, with security rated as by far the worst problem, outpacing corruption and the economy.

The sense of doom is fed by news reports on spectacular attacks, such as the February 11 raid in which suicide bombers and gunmen attacked several government sites across Kabul, killing at least 20 people; the June 13, 2008, raid on the main prison in Kandahar, which freed 1,200 prisoners; and the April 27, 2008, attempted assassination of President Hamid Karzai at a public ceremony.

Fears of impending disaster are hard to sustain, however, if you actually spend some time in Afghanistan, as we did recently at the invitation of General David Petraeus, chief of U.S. Central Command. Using helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and bone-jarring armored vehicles, we spent eight days traveling from the snow-capped peaks of Kunar province near the border with Pakistan in the east to the wind-blown deserts of Farah province in the west near the border with Iran. Along the way we talked with countless coalition soldiers, ranging from privates to a four-star general. We also attended a tribal *shura* or council—a fantastic affair straight out of an earlier century—to sample opinion among bearded Afghan elders. What we found is a situation that is cause for concern but far short of catastrophe—and one that is likely to improve before long.

To start with, much of the north, center, and west remains relatively secure. Attacks have increased in those areas but are still extremely low. Figures showing large increases are deceptive because the total numbers to begin with were so small and because most of the attacks produced few if any casualties. For instance, the Brookings Afghanistan Index shows a 48 percent increase in attacks last year in Regional Command-Capital, which encompasses Kabul and its environs and has a population of more than 4 million people. But the total (157 attacks in 2008) would have represented just four days of violence in Baghdad in the summer of 2006. (Overall civilian casualties in Afghanistan, while rising, are still 16 times lower than the comparable figure for Iraq in the pre-surge year of 2006.)

As these figures suggest, while the capital of Iraq was a war zone, the capital of Afghanistan is remarkably peaceful. Entire weeks go by without an insurgent attack, and the streets bustle with cars and pedestrians. Coalition offi-

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cials drive around in lightly armored SUVs, something that would have been unthinkable in Baghdad. We asked officers at NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in the middle of Kabul whether they took any incoming rocket or mortar fire. Such attacks were an almost daily occurrence in the Green Zone in Baghdad for years, with numerous personnel being killed only yards away from the U.S. ambassador's office. But at ISAF they could remember only a single ineffectual attack back in September 2008.

The idea that Kabul is under siege is a figment of the news media's imagination based on hyped reporting of a few isolated attacks. ISAF officers suggested to us that the recent insurgent raids on three government buildings, which generated so much negative publicity, were actually good news, because Afghan security forces, who have assumed lead responsibility for operations in much of the capital, were able to handle the crisis on their own. Commandos from the Afghan National Police Crisis Response Team stormed into the Justice Ministry within hours and killed all the attackers, who had hoped to carry out a protracted Mumbai-style siege. Other would-be suicide bombers were rounded up before they could set off their explosives.

The Afghan National Army is already the most trusted indigenous institution in the country. It has performed capably and bravely in countless battles.

Afghan National Army soldier

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Equally impressive progress is being made in Jalalabad, a city of perhaps 400,000 in eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province. Violence is low; U.S. troops don't even patrol the city, leaving that job to the Afghan National Security Forces. The Afghan army, police, and border police coordinate their activities through a "fusion" center which responds to an emergency phone number that residents can call in case of trouble. Economic development is booming, spurred by "Nangarhar Inc.," a development plan overseen by a U.S.-run Provincial Reconstruction Team in cooperation with local officials. "Nangarhar has progressed light years in the last six or seven years," says Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Daniel, who commands a battalion based in Jalalabad.

Not all of Regional Command-East is as peaceful or prosperous. This remains the second-most violent region in the country, behind only Regional Command-South. This is hardly surprising since RC-East is located along the long, mountainous eastern border with Pakistan, which has become a safe haven for numerous Islamist terrorist groups. With rumored assistance from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency, many of these groups are carrying out cross-border attacks in Afghanistan in pursuit of a bewildering array of strategies and objectives. Officers at the Bagram headquarters of the 101st Airborne Division, who run RC-East from the site of one of Alexander the Great's base camps, have taken to speaking of an insurgent "syndicate." Their charts draw numerous intersecting lines between nine different groups which alternately compete and cooperate with one another.

The most famous of these is al Qaeda, but its strongholds are located in Pakistan, and it does not play a leading role in Afghanistan. The other groups are often colloquially referred to as the Taliban, but this catch-all phrase hardly does justice to—and can actually distort understanding of—a complex, multifaceted insurgency. The Taliban proper under the direction of Mullah Mohammad Omar ("One-Eye") are based in the city of Quetta in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan, and their activities are largely confined to southern Afghanistan.

Other prominent insurgent groups include (bear with us) the Haqqani Network run by former mujahedeen leader Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin; the Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), a party led by another former mujahedeen commander, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; the Hezb-e Islami Khalisa, a breakaway faction of the Hezb-e

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Islami founded by the late Mohammad Yunus Khalis; the Tehrik-e Nefaz-e Shariat-e Mohammadi (TNSM), a group that is especially powerful in the Swat Valley and is run by Maulana Fazlullah, son-in-law of founder Sufi Muhammad; the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), commonly known as the Pakistan Taliban, who are headed by the notorious Baitullah Mehsud; the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the Punjab-based terrorist group responsible for the Mumbai attacks as well as numerous attacks in Kashmir; and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which was founded by a former Uzbek paratrooper, the late Jumaboi Khojayev, who was radicalized while fighting with the Red Army in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

The IMU has a pan-Central Asian focus, the TTP and TNSM are focused primarily on Pakistan, the LeT has a regional and even, increasingly, a global focus, while the Taliban and HiG are interested in taking over Afghanistan, and the Haqqani Network and HiK are thought to be primarily focused on seizing their traditional power-bases in eastern Afghanistan.

What unites these groups beyond a shared antipathy to the modern world, a propensity for violence, and a devotion to extremist forms of Islam? Some central direction is provided by three *shuras* or councils sitting in the western Pakistani cities of Quetta, Miram Shah, and Peshawar. (Baitullah Mehsud's TTP has its own *shura* in South Waziristan.) Connections with the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency also link most of these groups together. But the *shuras* provide only broad direction. Individual groups and subgroups act with considerable autonomy. That is a big advantage for the government of Afghanistan and its allies, since there is no Ho Chi Minh or Mao Zedong to knit together a far-flung insurgency into a cohesive movement.

Even without much central direction, however, these insurgent groups have been pursuing a loose-knit strategy whose contours are faintly discernible to ISAF. Some of the southern Taliban are pushing toward Kandahar, the central city of southern Afghanistan and a traditional Taliban stronghold. The northern groups are pushing toward Kabul. They are concentrating attacks on coalition and Afghan security forces in the countryside, hoping to drive them into the major cities and besiege them there. Eventually they hope to inflict enough pain on the coalition to force public opinion in Europe and North America to demand a withdrawal. Once the coalition is gone, they figure the government of Afghanistan will fall like rotten fruit.

In the meantime, to exert control of rural areas, they seek to intimidate anyone who dares to cooperate with the infidel "occupiers." The insurgents often post threatening "night letters" warning those who work with the foreigners and sometimes follow up by beheading supposed collaborators. Through such actions they have created a feeling of insecurity even in areas of Afghanistan where the objective levels of violence are not that high.

Unlike in Iraq, the insurgents in Afghanistan are not indiscriminately slaughtering the civilian population. Some are making greater use of suicide bombers, but their targets are largely the Afghan National Security Forces, coalition forces, and government officials. Such attacks, however, can all too easily go wrong. We visited a district center, in the Mandozai District of Khost Province, that had been hit on December 28. Guards prevented a suicide bomber driving a car from entering the compound, so he blew himself up at the gate, killing 14 children and 2 adults. The rubble is still visible.

To exert control of rural areas, the insurgents seek to intimidate anyone who dares to cooperate with the infidel 'occupiers.' Sometimes they behead supposed collaborators.

Whereas Iraqi insurgents might have reveled in such violence, their Afghan counterparts are more sensitive to the need to cultivate public opinion. They prefer for the coalition to kill civilians—something they make much more likely by hiding among civilians. The insurgents have made skillful use of collateral damage inflicted by the coalition, especially in air raids and what are known as "night raids" when Special Operations Forces swoop down on insurgents' homes after dark. The guerrillas have done a brilliant job of trumpeting civilian casualties—usually exaggerated, sometimes invented—to accuse the coalition of brutality. Wittingly or not, President Hamid Karzai has helped the enemy by harping on coalition-caused casualties while all but ignoring in his public pronouncements mention of the far greater number of deaths inflicted by the guerrillas. Numerous coalition commanders complained to us that, as one of them put it, "we are getting our ass whupped in the information war."

As a first step in regaining the initiative, the coalition would be well advised to limit or adjust the tactics of the notorious "night raids." These operations should be more closely coordinated with village elders and Afghan security forces both before and after the "kinetic" phase. (Elders at the Mandozai *shura* complained to us that such coordination is often lacking.) Otherwise,

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Special Operations units risk creating more enemies than they take off the battlefield.

When it comes to operations against coalition forces, the insurgents, like their Iraqi counterparts, rely primarily on improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The number set off increased from 2,569 in 2007 to 3,742 in 2008. The bombs employed in Afghanistan are, however, less sophisticated than in Iraq. So far Explosively Formed Penetrators, the armor-piercing munitions that Iran shipped to Iraqi terrorists, have not made an appearance in Afghanistan. So coalition troops have a fair degree of protection as long as they stay in Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, 2,000 of which have been shipped to Afghanistan. Of course, sufficient quantities of explosives can penetrate any armor in the world, and some MRAPs have suffered terrible damage.

While not as sophisticated as Iraqi terrorists in the dark arts of the IED, Afghan insurgents are rated more proficient in light infantry tactics thanks to the training they have received in Pakistan. "This is a capable opponent," says Brigadier General Mark Milley, deputy commander of the 101st Airborne Division. Insurgents most often operate in groups of 5 to 15 but sometimes they can mass several hundred fighters. When they get into firefights, they sometimes draw close enough to use their weapons effectively, and they have shown the ability to fire and maneuver in squad-, platoon-, and even company-sized formations. "We used to see sporadic RPG [rocket-propelled grenade] fire several years ago. This past year we have seen RPG volley fire," Milley says. Often the insurgents will fight to the death, but they have a crude system of "medevac," with stretcher bearers organized to take casualties off the battlefield on foot.

In the east, the insurgents are helped immeasurably by the terrain—some of the world's tallest mountains split up the population into numerous small valleys that are cut off from one another, much less from the outside world. It has always been hard to establish any degree of central control in mountainous terrain from the Caucasus to Colombia, and Afghanistan is no exception. "This is perfect guerrilla country," Milley remarked as we flew with him in a Black Hawk helicopter over the snowy Hindu Kush.

In an attempt to control insurgent movements across a porous border, U.S. forces have established a number of small combat outposts in the hinterlands. Some are beyond the reach of Afghanistan's primitive road network and are dubbed "air centric" because they can be supplied only from the air. Unfortunately some of these remote positions are so small that the troops inside have to devote most of their resources to defending themselves, and they have scant capability to project much combat power "outside the wire." Each has become, in military slang, a "self-licking ice cream cone." Some American units are in the process of pulling back some of those isolated bases and consolidating most of their troops into at least company-sized detachments (100 or more soldiers), the smallest number they believe can maneuver and safely sustain themselves in this dangerous environment. In Iraq, practicing the classic counterinsurgency tactic of positioning the troops among the population required taking them off giant Forward Operating Bases and putting them into smaller bases. In Afghanistan it may require slightly bigger bases, though still considerably smaller than mega-FOBs like Baghdad's Camp Victory, with its tens of thousands of inhabitants.

One should not exaggerate the combat prowess of the insurgents. Occasionally, it is true, they are able to catch a coalition unit off guard and inflict considerable casualties. Two such incidents occurred last year in RC-East when a newly arrived French detachment suffered nine killed in action and when a new, still-unfinished American outpost was hit so heavily that nine American soldiers were killed. But such incidents are the exception, not the rule. Most insurgent attacks inflict no casualties on coalition forces and result in devastating losses for the attackers when coalition troops call in air or artillery strikes. The Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police are less well armed and trained and so suffer more heavily, but the ANA, at least, has shown itself superior to the enemy in every major firefight. By coming out to fight in the open (which they do much more often than their Iraqi counterparts), insurgents actually play to the strengths of American troops and their allies.

More effective from the enemy standpoint have been attacks on coalition lines of communication. The Pakistan Taliban have been attacking private trucks hired to lug supplies from the port of Karachi, Pakistan, into Afghanistan. Their Afghan counterparts have also been mining roads and blowing up culverts and bridges, replicating tactics that the mujahedeen once used against the Red Army. The Russians have contributed to the coalition's difficulties by pressuring Kyrgyzstan to close the U.S. air base at Manas, which is a primary hub for aerial tankers supporting coalition aircraft as well as a transit point for troops flying in and out of Afghanistan.

Given the hyperbolic reporting on these supply woes, when we arrived we half expected to find troops cowering in unheated hovels without sufficient bullets to fire, fuel to move, or food to fill their bellies. Nothing could be further from the truth. U.S. forces in Afghanistan appear to be as well supplied as their counterparts in Iraq. Certainly there is no dearth of fresh eggs, cakes, ice cream, and other chow in the dining facilities we visited. The cappuccino is still flowing at numerous Green Beans coffee houses. At the main base in Kandahar, troops can eat at Pizza Hut, Subway, or the Canadian doughnut outlet Tim Horton's while surfing the Internet via Wi-Fi.

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It turns out that the materiel flowing through Pakistan, which is the most vulnerable to interdiction, is mostly not critical to the coalition mission. Much of it is lower-priority goods such as building supplies to expand bases and Humvees to equip the Afghan Army. The most important stuff—everything from weapons and bullets to communications gear and MRAPs—is airlifted in. The coalition still gets 30 percent of its fuel through Pakistan, but 70 percent now comes via an alternative route running south from Turkmenistan. Senior commanders are now figuring out how to rejigger lines of communication to cope with potential disruptions. But supply difficulties are hardly a critical impediment to the coalition's future success, except insofar as they divert troops into endless highway patrols and thus fail to secure the most critical population centers.

Contrary to the gloomy impression prevalent back home, commanders on the ground expressed confidence that they would be able to beat back the insurgency with the additional U.S. troops now flowing in. The 38,000 U.S. troops currently in Afghanistan will be joined by 17,000 more by this summer thanks to reinforcements wisely authorized by President Obama, and more may be coming later. One Brigade Combat Team, part of an earlier reinforcement authorized by President Bush, had just arrived in RC-East when we were visiting. With the addition of Polish and French forces—which come without any of the caveats that have hindered the effectiveness of most other NATO contingents—RC-East has seen a considerable boost in troop strength. Just a few weeks ago, Wardak and Logar provinces south of Kabul were garrisoned by only 400 U.S. troops. Now they will have more than 4,000, an entire brigade, and the two existing U.S. brigades in RC-East will be able to shrink their area of operations considerably, thus concentrating more troops in less "battlespace."

The transformation will be even more dramatic in RC-South, which General David McKiernan, the ISAF commander, currently describes as a "stalemate." An officer in the south told us, "We've said we're doing counterinsurgency in the south but we've never resourced it." That is about to change. This region will receive almost all of the 17,000 additional U.S. troops, including a Marine Expeditionary Brigade and an Army Stryker Brigade Combat Team, to reinforce the existing force of just 3,300 Americans. (There are also 20,000 other troops in RC-South from 16 nations, the biggest contingents being 8,200 Brits, 3,500 Canadians, 2,100 Dutch, and 1,050 Australians.) Beyond this ground combat power, there will be a major increase in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets and a doubling of rotary airpower with the arrival of a whole new U.S. Army Combat Aviation Brigade to supplement the one already in Afghanistan.

This represents a significant change in the correlation of forces on the battlefield, and coalition commanders expect that it will allow them to take the fight to the enemy in ways that were impossible before. Their goal is to conduct "shape, clear, hold, and build" operations in conjunction with Afghan allies. Their expectation is that the insurgents will violently contest their efforts, resulting in an increase in attacks and casualties during the summer fighting season. But coalition commanders are fully confident that before long, perhaps by the fall, insurgents will have taken a licking, forcing them to retreat. As one American officer put it to us, "An awful lot of bad guys are going to get killed in the next four to six months." They recall what happened last year in Garmsir District in Helmand Province, when the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit arrived in the spring. The 2,500 Marines faced a hard fight for a month, but gradually they drove out the enemy, allowing bazaars to reopen, *shuras* to be conducted, and development assistance to flow.

As coalition troops make progress this summer in RC-South, focusing in particular in Helmand, Kandahar, and Zabul provinces, there is a danger that they may wind up pushing some of the insurgents farther west into Nimroz, Farah, and Herat provinces, where there are currently very few coalition troops. We traveled across Farah province and discovered a vast, ungoverned desert that just happens to be on the border with Iran. Published reports suggest that Iran's Quds Force is providing training and supplies to some of the insurgents inside Afghanistan. To avoid the risk that upcoming operations will destabilize western Afghanistan, it is imperative to put more U.S. troops into those areas as well, something that probably cannot be done before 2010. Even if 2 or 3 American brigades are dispatched to RC-West to go with the 7 likely to be in Afghanistan by the end of the year (2 of them on a training mission), that will still result in only 9 or 10 brigade combat teams (45,000 to 55,00 troops, plus enablers) in the country, fewer than half the 22 in Iraq at the height of the surge.

It is not, of course, anyone's intention that foreign forces carry the bulk of the fight in Afghanistan indefinitely. And they won't have to. The Afghan National Army has already established itself as the most trusted indigenous institution in the entire country. This ethnically balanced force has performed capably and bravely in battles too numerous to count. It has taken heavy losses, but it has not suffered heavy desertions. "The enemy cannot fight us face to face," Brigadier General Sher Mohammad Zazai, commander of the ANA's 205th Corps based in Kandahar, told us proudly.

The problem is that the ANA is still far too small, numbering only 80,000 soldiers. The Afghan National Police, which is less effective and more corrupt, has another 70,000 personnel. That's 150,000 security personnel for a coun-

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try of 30 million. By way of comparison, Iraq, which has a smaller population, has more than 500,000 men in its army and police forces. The current plan to expand the ANA—it is supposed to reach 134,000 men by the end of 2011—is completely inadequate to the size of the challenge. Since the government of Afghanistan lacks the money and resources to do the job itself, the United States and its allies will have to fund and support a much larger (and, if possible, much faster) expansion of the Afghan National Security Forces. We should immediately commit to the goal of a 250,000-strong ANA. Afghan troops also need better equipment—everything from armored vehicles and helicopters to night-vision devices—and they need it as soon as possible.

U.S. commanders plan to meet the needs of the growing Afghan forces by sending an entire brigade of the 82nd Airborne to Afghanistan to focus on the training mission. The tentative plan is to break up this force into embedded training teams. Trainers we spoke with, although desperate for reinforcements, expressed grave reservations about this scheme. The problem is that there are not enough senior officers and noncommissioned officers in a regular brigade to provide seasoned mentors for Afghan military leaders who have been fighting for decades. A veteran Afghan colonel is not likely to pay much heed to the pronouncements of a fresh-faced American captain who has never commanded a unit in battle. This is a society that values gray hair, and the U.S. armed forces will have to dig deep to provide the senior mentors necessary. This will be a painful process, but it will pay major dividends: It is much cheaper (in both dollars and lives) to stand up Afghan forces than to send more American combat troops into harm's way.

Since it will take years to create larger, more effective security forces, coalition officials are understandably looking for short cuts. Much hope is invested in a new program to create an Afghan Public Protection Force. Starting with a trial program in Wardak Province, the idea is to ask local leaders to select young men who will receive a few weeks of training and then will be sent back to their communities to act as a police auxiliary, protecting villages against insurgents. American officials stress that this is not meant to be a new tribal militia of the kind that has plagued Afghanistan in the past. The new force, they say, will be fully accountable to the interior ministry and to local police chiefs. If successful, the Afghan Public Protection Force could fill an important need—but that's a big if, since similar programs have foundered in the past.

To deny the insurgents sanctuary requires establishing control of contested areas. If coalition forces are a fleeting presence, locals will be afraid to rat out terrorists.

Coalition soldier on patrol in a village

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No one claims that force alone can defeat the insurgents (General Petraeus recently told *Time* magazine that "you cannot kill your way out of an insurgency"), but clearly a greater level of security in the east and south is essential for progress on political, social, or economic development. In that regard one of the biggest problems cited by Afghans is the corruption of their own government. The symbol of this problem is Ahmed Wali Karzai, brother of President Hamid Karzai, who is the head of the Kandahar Provincial Council and the most powerful man in this crucial southern province. Numerous reports link him to the drug trade, although no definitive evidence has ever been made public and he has denied the charges. Nevertheless there is a widespread impression that the president's brother is involved in narco-trafficking and that the president is running protection for him. Numerous other, lower-profile government officials (including a number of governors) are said to be connected with the illicit narcotics trade, which is Afghanistan's leading industry.

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The drug business, centered in the southern provinces (Helmand is the biggest producer, but Farah is catching up), produces 90 percent of the world's opium, worth an estimated $4 billion a year. Of that total, the United Nations estimates $500 million goes into the hands of the insurgents, who provide protection for the narco-traffickers and collect taxes from poppy farmers. That makes the drug trade a major concern for the coalition. Yet NATO's mandate does not allow coalition troops to target the drug lords directly. That is a job reserved for Afghanistan's counternarcotics forces, which are advised by DynCorp contractors paid by the U.S. State Department, and which work with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and other law-enforcement agencies. But ISAF forces are starting to get into the anti-drug fight because the poppy-eradication forces are protected by Afghan Army troops who have with them embedded American advisers. When these forces are attacked on anti-drug missions, they can call in coalition support including quick-reaction forces, medevac, and airstrikes.

It makes sense for ISAF troops to take on the corrosive drug trade, which funds the insurgency and undermines governmental legitimacy, but doing it through this backdoor route carries a heavy cost in inefficiency. As things now stand, counter-drug efforts are poorly integrated with a larger counterinsurgency strategy in the south.

In a recent poll, only 4 percent of Afghans expressed a desire to be ruled by the Taliban. The insurgents can only take power if coalition forces give up the fight and hand the Islamists a victory.

Developing such a strategy has been, to put it mildly, challenging given the competing demands of 41 countries that are represented in ISAF. Few of them will even admit that they are fighting a "war," a word that is not used in NATO's plans. Some of the foreign contingents—notably the British, Australians, Canadians, and French—are willing to fight, take risks, and suffer losses, but many others refuse to leave their bases. Even those troops who are willing to engage in combat are not well integrated with the overall effort. The British and Canadians, for example, operate in national task forces in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, respectively, and like other coalition units they have to check with their home governments before they can undertake certain missions.

Trying to bring some coherence to this unwieldy coalition is General McKiernan, an American four-star who is commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan as well as ISAF. (Almost all American forces are now under ISAF authority, the notable exceptions being a small number of Special Operations Forces and a larger number of trainers embedded with Afghan Army and police forces.)

McKiernan's task is made considerably more difficult by the polyglot nature of ISAF's headquarters in Kabul and Kandahar, which are designed to maximize coalition representation rather than military effectiveness. In the U.S. military, headquarters staff will train together for a year before deploying into a combat zone. In ISAF, headquarters staffs from many different nations assemble only a few weeks before heading to Afghanistan. Making the problem worse, while most Americans stay in Afghanistan for at least a year, most other NATO soldiers are on four- to six-month rotations, making it almost impossible to achieve any coherence or continuity. Even NATO officers privately admit that the resulting arrangement is, as one of them put it, "partially dysfunctional." Their American counterparts are more scathing. "You couldn't pay someone to come up with a more screwed-up structure than we have here," one colonel in Kabul told us. Yet as long as the top concern is to keep the coalition together, making significant changes involves a diplomatic nightmare.

The essential problem is that in Afghanistan there is nothing resembling the smooth-functioning arrangements that were in place in Iraq by 2007, with Multinational Forces-Iraq under Petraeus overseeing the strategic framework, Multi-National Corps-Iraq under Lieutenant General Ray Odierno running day to day operations, and both in turn cooperating closely with the U.S. embassy led by Ambassador Ryan Crocker, who had control of most civilian development efforts. There is no Odierno equivalent in Afghanistan since there is no corps headquarters. McKiernan has to act as both Petraeus and Odierno, while also dealing with tasks neither man faced in herding 41 coalition countries and a multitude of international organizations.

Some possible improvements in these schizophrenic command and control arrangements have been discussed, including creating a new corps headquarters in Kabul and an American division headquarters in RC-South. (There is already an American division headquarters in RC-East.) The problem is that it would be diplomatically difficult to make a corps headquarters or a division headquarters a purely American affair, and if it were another ISAF affair, it would likely prove more hindrance than help.

As a result General McKiernan is implementing some clever work-arounds. To boost the effectiveness of ISAF, he has increased the number of American officers on its staff and created an entirely new command, U.S. Forces Afghan-

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istan, whose job is, in part, to bolster the ISAF staff. As for the south, he has asked the British military, which is due to take command of the region in the fall, to send an existing division headquarters that has trained together for a full year rather than the usual coalition pick-up team.

Only time will tell whether these patches can fix the deep difficulties in ISAF's command structure. But at some point the United States will have to decide what price it is willing to pay for keeping all of the ISAF contributors happy, most of whom send contingents so small or so heavily limited by caveats that they contribute little or nothing to the success of the mission. A smaller coalition could actually be more effective. Thus the United States should not be afraid to make decisions that might lead some of the more faint-hearted contributors to pull out.

One of the top areas that needs to be addressed is the inability of ISAF forces under their NATO mandate to hold prisoners for more than 96 hours. This is driven by distaste among the Europeans and Canadians for getting involved in detention operations with their whiff of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo. But the result is that it is self-defeatingly difficult to take enemy fighters off the battlefield. Detainees turned over to Afghan forces are liable to be released because the Afghan legal system has scant ability to process or hold insurgents. Those released include 37 of 41 detainees returned to Afghanistan from Guantánamo. Many of them are believed to have returned to fighting coalition forces. This "catch and release" pattern not only undermines the morale of coalition and Afghan forces but also jeopardizes the willingness of villagers to cooperate with the coalition, because they know that terrorists they turn in could be back to wreak vengeance within weeks. "We catch IED facilitators and release them," one American officer in RC-South told us. "We hope and pray they don't come back to hit our guys."

The small number of U.S. forces still outside the NATO mandate do have the right to take prisoners, but they are holding only 620 detainees at the Theater Internment Facility located at Bagram Air Base north of Kabul. Another 350 suspected insurgents are housed at the Afghan National Detention Facility, a wing at the Pul-e-Charkhi prison that has been built and supervised by American personnel but is operated by Afghans. By way of comparison, at the height of the surge in Iraq, U.S. forces were detaining 24,000 people. And no one suggests that Afghanistan's insurgents are 24 times fewer than Iraq's. Although counting the enemy is an inexact science in any counterinsurgency, the estimates we heard suggest that there are at least as many enemy fighters in Afghanistan as in Iraq. Some will be killed and others may be co-opted, but it will be hard to pacify the country until more of these terrorists are locked up.

For the long term, that will require putting more efforts into bolstering the rule of law in Afghanistan—building prisons and courts and training judges, lawyers, and prison guards. That is something that has not received nearly the priority it deserved, and it has created an opening for the Taliban who operate *sharia* courts to settle disputes that ought to be settled by tribal elders or government courts. But even with more resources being poured into this area, it will take years to build sufficient judicial capacity. In the meantime, defeating the insurgency will require the United States to expand its own detention facilities. (The Bagram facility is already being renovated to handle 1,200 prisoners by the fall, but there is room there to build cells for as many as 3,000 more.) Just as important, it will require the United States to push its allies to allow ISAF forces to detain terrorism suspects. Even if our allies balk at this (as most surely will), U.S. commanders should give U.S. troops wider detention authority than they currently enjoy under their NATO mandate.

Even under the best of circumstances, the coalition will face a long, difficult fight in Afghanistan. But it is hardly a mission impossible. It is not even as difficult as the war in Iraq, where the insurgents were better organized and more deadly. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that bringing a measure of stability to Afghanistan will require considerable expenditure of blood and treasure over a number of years. Is it worth it?

Those who answer in the negative point out that Afghanistan no longer hosts substantial concentrations of al Qaeda. They argue that it is these international terrorists who should be of concern to the United States and that we shouldn't waste our resources fighting the Taliban and assorted other local malefactors. It is true that today there are more al Qaeda fighters, to say nothing of leaders, in Pakistan than in Afghanistan. But the most effective steps we can take to target them, using Predators and other assets, are made possible by the coalition troop presence in Afghanistan. If coalition forces pull out of Afghanistan or substantially reduce their presence, the already limited willingness of the government of Pakistan to cooperate with the United States will evaporate. Pakistan will see that the Taliban are heading toward victory and will cut deals with them—something that is already happening but will accelerate if U.S. forces are seen as being on the way out.

A victory for the insurgents in Afghanistan would have baleful consequences on many levels. It would, first of all, be a major morale-boost to the terrorists and a devastating blow to American prestige and credibility. The mujahedeen victory over the Red Army led to the rise of al Qaeda and

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hastened the dissolution of the Soviet Union. There is no doubt that al Qaeda would trumpet an insurgent victory in Afghanistan today as the defeat of another superpower by the jihadists. An insurgent victory would also surely lead to the establishment of major terrorist base camps in Afghanistan of the kind that existed prior to September 11, 2001. Finally, an insurgent victory in Afghanistan would significantly undermine the government in Pakistan. Many of the groups fighting in the Pashtun belt of Afghanistan and Pakistan are as eager to topple the government in Islamabad as the one in Kabul, and victory on one side of the border would accelerate their efforts on the other side. Conversely, if the coalition could stabilize Afghanistan, that would provide a major boost to the government of Pakistan in its efforts to police its frontier districts.

Those who say that we cannot succeed in Afghanistan without fixing Pakistan have it backwards. We cannot begin to improve the situation in Pakistan without improving Afghanistan, and it is possible to do that no matter what happens in Pakistan because, for all the cross-border support it receives, the Afghan insurgency remains largely home-grown.

While the United States is in Afghanistan to battle terrorism, it cannot define its mission in narrow "counter-terrorism" terms. That is a term of art within the military for commando strikes carried out by Special Operations and CIA forces backed by precision airpower. Such strikes have to be an integral part of the American war effort, but they cannot be its sum total. We have been pursuing such actions for years in Afghanistan without significantly weakening the insurgency. As one senior American officer told us, "I thought we could decapitate the insurgency. I was wrong. We've gone through 22 HVTs [high value targets] in this province, but they nominate someone new to take over leadership very fast. The duration of our success is no more than three to four weeks before the insurgents have a new leader, and often that person is younger and more brutal. Even if someone killed Baitullah Mehsud [head of the Pakistan Taliban], someone else will simply take over."

Experience in Iraq showed that the only effective way to deny terrorists sanctuary is to pursue a full-spectrum counterinsurgency strategy that establishes governmental control of contested areas. That means putting coalition and local security forces into villages where they can gain the trust of the locals and thereby secure the intelligence needed to root out terrorists. Otherwise, if coalition forces are only a fleeting presence, locals will never rat out the terrorists for fear of retribution. The security "line of operations" has to be coupled with efforts to promote better governance and economic and social development.

Those who claim that this is a fool's errand because Afghanistan has never had any effective governance only reveal their own ignorance of that country's long and proud history. For all its tribalism and internecine warfare, Afghanistan has been an independent country since the 18th century, with such strong monarchs as Dost Mohammad, who drove out a British incursion in 1842 and ruled for 33 years. Under King Mohammad Zahir Shah, who ruled from 1933 to 1973, Afghanistan made considerable economic and political progress, including the adoption of a fairly democratic written constitution. It was relatively peaceful and stable before a Marxist coup in 1978 set off a long period of war and turmoil whose most consequential events were the Soviet invasion in 1979, the Soviets' departure in 1989, and the rise of the Taliban starting in 1994.

In seeking to repair Afghanistan's tattered social fabric, the coalition will have to foster the growth of representative government, which is hardly an alien import but rather comports neatly with Afghanistan's long tradition of tribal councils that rely on the consent of the community. That doesn't mean that the coalition should foster a rigidly centralized regime. In fact, a bit more decentralization could be a spur to progress. In particular, it is important to change the constitution to allow governors to be elected rather than appointed by the president in order to make them more accountable to those they are supposed to serve.

But the West would be making a big mistake if it were to give up on supporting the governmental system that it helped to midwife in 2002. That doesn't necessarily mean supporting Hamid Karzai—but neither does it mean pushing him out. Officials in the Obama administration, from Vice President Biden on down, have been publicly trashing the president of Afghanistan without grooming a viable alternative. This will only make our task more difficult if Karzai is reelected in the presidential election scheduled to be held in August. It is important to respect the wishes of the Afghan people, as expressed at the ballot box, while working to bolster the effectiveness of their anemic governmental institutions.

The greatest asset that the United States and its allies have in the battle for Afghanistan's future is the people of Afghanistan. In a recent poll conducted by ABC, the BBC, and ARD, only 4 percent of Afghans expressed a desire to be ruled by the Taliban. Sunni and Shiite insurgents in Iraq enjoyed far higher levels of popular support in their respective communities at the height of the violence. For all their ferocity and cunning, the insurgents in Afghanistan do not offer a viable alternative that can win widespread acceptance. They can only take power if coalition forces give up the fight. To do so would hand Islamist terrorists their most significant—indeed, almost their only—victory since 9/11. It is fully in the power of coalition forces to prevent that dire outcome, but only if they have the popular support back home to finish what we started in 2001. ♦

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Showered with Praise

The media's love affair with the idea of Barack Obama

By Noemie Emery

"The other night I dreamt of Barack Obama," *New York Times* blogger Judith Warner wrote in a much-buzzed-about entry on February 5. "He was taking a shower right when I needed to get into the bathroom to shave my legs." Indeed. There were stories that John F. Kennedy, while knocking on doors in his campaigns for the House and the Senate, used to ask householders for the use of a tub to ease his back miseries, but this may be the first time that an actual president turned up in a shower, even if only in dreams. But this was far from the end of the story, as Warner afterwards seemed to find many friends or acquaintances who reported dreams or daydreams of contact with our national leader. "There was a dream, sent from Minneapolis, about buying Barack the perfect sandwich," Warner informs us, "and a dream from Westport, Conn., about inviting Michelle and the girls over" for a play date and lunch. Some women dreamed "about sex with the president." There was the 62-year-old woman in Florida who dreamed that the 47-year-old Obama had married her, after having first been divorced by his wife.

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The post drew 289 responses, some of which even seemed rational. "Do you ever write about non-neurotic people, or do they not exist in your universe?" asked one poleaxed reader. "Paging Dr. Freud to the Warner residence!" said another. "I think the Secret Service may need to touch base with some of these people," said a third, and another remarked rather sagely, "I dreamed that I read a column about President Obama in the *New York Times* that took the country and its problems seriously. This column wasn't it." Most, however, seemed to think these effusions were perfectly rational, and offered a few of their own. A Washington woman described as a "global health care consultant" confessed, "I dreamed I was an Obama girl. . . . There were dark velvet chairs and he was standing there with all this dark and mist around him. His lips so purple and sensuous as if to be otherworldly. I moved gently toward him and then I said the wrong thing." Another reader, in her dreams at least, was rather more fortunate: "I too had a dream about Barack Obama. We were at some sort of a luncheon together. He was very friendly and a bit provocative. I may have sat in his lap."

There was another set whose aspirations were less on the lap-and-purple-lipped level, and more on the plane of good works. These came from those in the change-based community, who saw "change" as a thing you "created," and a tangible good in itself. "I feel like I know Barack," said a Washington lawyer, "that I have worked grassroots and created change in the way that he has. I [also] have feelings of a mom who had possibility but ended up running school auctions . . . rather than having the opportunity to be out there on a national level creating change." As a "creator of change" on the highest of levels, Obama to them was the lost opportunity, the much higher road that they had not taken, and the object of wistful longing. "I'm a current ivy league student and have this nagging, back of my head, wouldn't share with anyone fear that . . . the next Obamas are running around our cam-

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pus and I'm not friends with them," as one reader put it.

Feelings like this sloshed over into the national media, to the *Washington Post*, where Eli Saslow marveled at the chiseled chest muscles of the president-elect as he emerged from the surf on his Christmas vacation; to *Time* and to *Newsweek*, which, having declared him a success before he even took office, compared him (favorably) to Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt, and celebrated him in iconic and worshipful covers that seemed to have run every week. Obama, it seems clear, is not your usual pol, but a cosmic event and communal experience, on a whole other plane than traditional norms. "What's wonderful is that this political/cultural experience is propelling American society—and perhaps the planet—into a whole new phase of evolution and development," wrote one of Warner's respondents. And indeed, she would seem to speak for them all.

The idea of Obama has taken on a life of its own that exists quite apart from the actual man, and that has always been bigger, and much more alluring, than he. It is not what he does, but what he is and implies that has been so compelling, and one thing he is is not-white. Or he is half-white—a black man, who was brought up and raised by his mother's white family—which makes him still better: as a genetic mixture of Kenya and Kansas, he emerged as the literal symbol of national union, the two racial strains merged as one.

Anyone—your Colin Powell, your Michael Steele, your Condi Rice (who had a boomlet around 2006 in Republican circles)—could break barriers (as John Kennedy did with religion some 40 years earlier), but only Obama could appear in this role of a tangible symbol, the word, or the ideal, made flesh. Penumbrae of mangers and bulrushes lurked in the background, sensed, if not said in the open. Some people did say it, if in jest: "The Child ventured forth to bring light unto all the world," Gerard Baker wrote in a satirical piece for the London *Times* at the apex of Obama's Grand Tour last summer. "The Child was blessed in looks and intellect. Scion of a simple family, offspring of a miraculous union, grandson of a typical white person and an African peasant. . . . The Elders were astonished at what they heard and said among themselves, 'Verily, who is this Child that he opens our hearts and minds to the audacity of hope?'" It was all fairly risible (and was lampooned in ads with cuts to a number of biblical epics), but the emotion behind it was all too compelling, and the longing across the entire political spectrum was so transparent and open that when Obama at last put his hand on the Bible, many conservatives had tears (not of grief) in their eyes. This was the high end of Obamamania, an aspirational note that at least had some substance behind it. But other forms of this feeling were not quite this high.

In the second half of this meme, it matters less that Obama is biracial than that he is metropolitan, and less that he is black or part black than that he is blue. That is, blue as in blue state America; and urban, as well as urbane. He is not just our first black, but our first metropolitan president (at least in a long time), a city boy as opposed to a son of the suburbs or soil, someone who is not from the heart of the heartland, who does not believe that the soul of the country resides in small towns. True, he lived his early life outside of the country—Indonesia and Hawaii are not Brooklyn Heights—but once he began to choose his own settings, his choices were all in big cities: Morningside Heights in New York, Cambridge in Boston, and Hyde Park in Chicago, where he set down his roots. The most urban candidate since Al Smith ran and lost 80 years earlier, he was an oddity even within his own party: The Roosevelt cousins were at home in New York, but their hearts were in Sagamore Hill and Hyde Park on the Hudson; JFK was urbane, but he lived in a country called Privilege, and the home of his heart was Cape Cod. The heart of Obama resides in the city. Obama, the fatherless waif who invented himself as an urbanite, is the flip-side of George W. Bush, the dynast born in Connecticut (where his grandfather would be senator), who rejected his ties to the eastern establishment and embraced his Texan identity—to the point of wearing his Texas Air National Guard jacket and chewing tobacco at Yale.

If Obamamania is the flip side of Bush hatred, then the embrace of Obama by the *Times*, *Time*, and *Newsweek* is the product of their rejection of Bush and his culture, their assertion that they and their culture are better than his is, and that they, as its products, are better and brighter than he. To understand this, one has to remember two things: that the most vehement and vicious objections to Bush came less from the traditional left than the lifestyle glossies; and the hysteria that descended on blue state America in 2004, when George W. Bush of Crawford defeated John Forbes Kerry (D-Nuance) of Beacon Hill, Georgetown, Nantucket, Sun Valley, and anywhere else that his millionaire wife had a residence. "Do you mean there's still going to be civilization?" James Atlas wrote in *New York* magazine in November 2004, the day after the unthinkable happened. "Classical music, summaries of the week's *New York Times Book Review*, murmurous programs on the 'Treasures of Ancient China' exhibit at the Met?"

The Met survived Bush (the *Times* is a whole other story), but with Obama, Atlas can rest easy: Obama is the candidate for those who believe that the *New York Times Book Review* defines civilization, and Obama will be their revenge. He is Metro, not Retro. He is not from Texas, and doesn't talk southern. He does not have a ranch, which he does not cut brush on. He has never run anything, but they haven't either. He does talk and write, which are their professions. He doesn't look like the men on Mount Rushmore, but then, they don't either. (Instead, he looks like a catalogue model, or someone in the window of Barney's or Saks.) He

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was endorsed, not by the NRA, but by the fashion industry, whose members designed whole collections around him. Not only the *Times*, but Condé Nast, loves him. He is Woody Allen's *Manhattan* to Gary Cooper's *High Noon*.

He is, in effect, themselves only better, which explains his attraction for *New York Times* bloggers, and for their soulmates at *Newsweek* and *Time*. "These are people for whom the Obamas are not just a beacon . . . but . . . a kind of mirror," as Warner writes. "This is the first president I've known who looks, talks, and acts like a peer," as one man told her. "I feel like I understand what he's like and where's he coming from. . . . If you stopped the clock in 2004 . . . he'd feel roughly like a peer in terms of accomplishments. . . . Despite his incredible achievements, he still seems like a lot of people I know."

Believing the right is made up of dorks and bigots, liberals find the idea of Obama a tonic and twofer, allowing them to think well of themselves on two different levels—as the wonderful people who backed and elected our first nonwhite president; and as the wonderful people who set style everywhere, the ultimate last word in cool. Either would do, but the two put together—the messiah and model in one lissome package—was enough to make them go bonkers, and bonkers they went. "As a nation, we're shedding our childlike, rural innocence and becoming more mature, urban, urbane . . . dare I say it, sophisticated?" Joe Klein enthused, and went on to declare the Obama administration an astonishing triumph before it had started, and well in advance of the fact. So did Jonathan Alter, in spite of the fact that the stock market had only gone down with Obama's accession. "Chin up, everyone. This president is well poised to bring us back from the brink," he declared, just before Obama embarked on his first speech before Congress. How did Alter know this? Well, he just knew. Obama was so "naturally confident," so bold, and yet humble, so brainy (in the same way as Alter), so much the "smart, cool instructor, trusted by the class to explain." So Obama explained things. And then the Dow declined even more.

The idea of Obama has taken on a life of its own that exists quite apart from the actual man.

The high point of Obama as an idea may have come between his election and his inauguration, when imagination roamed free and his potential was limitless, while the reckoning came when he had to stop talking, and act. "There isn't much further he can go as a speechmaker," said the TV critic Tom Shales, no friend to Obama's enemies. "'It is time for America to lead again,' he said, but hasn't he said that before? How many times can he say 'it's time' before it really is time? The honeymoon might go on, but if it turns out to be a case of too much talk and too little action, the great communal cry of national disappointment will be crushing, and cruel." Wall Street was proving immune to the cult of Obama. There was a whole lot of action, but most of it seemed to be down. "It's heading toward 6,000," said MSNBC's Chris Matthews of the Dow, his leg tingle quite vanished. "People are really getting angry. I'm getting angry. . . . They are really angry and they're going to get mad at him if we don't get this market turned around." By March 3, Christopher Buckley and David Brooks, the leading Obamacons of 2008, were both peeling off, holding their heads, and moaning of deficits. Even Maureen Dowd did a 180, referring to her man's "disturbing spells of passivity." The intoxication was wearing off fast.

"Barack Obama had a gift and he knew it," ran the start of a long *Newsweek* piece about the election. "He had a way of making very smart, very accomplished people feel virtuous" simply by helping him out. "Obama's gift correlates with the inner needs of his audience," noted the blogger Scott Johnson. And so it did. That audience voted for him because he made them feel better, because he made them feel brave, noble, and tolerant; because he made them feel better than Bush and some others; because he made them feel part of a select clique of people, because he made them feel clever, and cool. They know they and Obama are smarter than Bush is because . . . well, they know it. In 2004, Howell Raines was sure that John Kerry was smarter than Bush was, and the records proved otherwise. What if facts prove otherwise now?

For the past six years, if not more, the implication of everything written in the *Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Vanity Fair*, and the *New Yorker* was that if only they had one of their own in the White House, he could really ace this whole president business, which only seemed hard because Bush was so clueless, so Texan, so lacking in intellect (at least as defined by their editors' standards). But Obama's first weeks have not been promising. The *Daily Telegraph* (U.K.) writes that Obama is "overwhelmed" by his office, and "surprise[d] at the sheer volume of business that crosses his desk." This has not gone unnoticed. "In ways both large and small, what's left of the American establishment is taking his measure and, with surprising swiftness, they are finding him lacking," as Howard Fineman reports. What if he turns out to be no more able than Bush was to figure out how to calm down the markets, how to close Gitmo without causing more problems, what to do about Russia and Pakistan, and how to keep Iran from getting a nuclear weapon without risk of starting a war? How sophisticated will Klein feel if the Dow hits 5000? Where will Warner and pen pals go with their fantasies? The shower they wanted to take with Obama may be a cold dousing quite soon. ♦

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Sassanid rock relief from Rag-i-Bibi

JONATHAN LEE

History in Stone

The untapped riches of Afghanistan

BY ANN MARLOWE

I turned carefully to scan the horizon. Nearby, French archeologists had recently uncovered 40 *stupas* and three Buddhist monasteries, but I couldn't see them. With just a foot of crumbling mud brick separating me from a 60-foot fall, I didn't push my luck.

I was on top of the Minar-i-Zadyan, Afghanistan's oldest minaret, also known as the Minaret of Daulatabad, 20 miles from Balkh. I'd allowed my Afghan friends' kids to climb the dark, steep internal stairway with me and a voluble young Afghan archaeology buff, Reza Hossaini. But the minaret is missing as much as a third of its original height, coming to an end in broken masonry rather than a platform from which the call to prayer would have sounded. I was worried that seven-year-old Leeza, who has no fear of heights, would lose her balance as she shifted around to examine the view.

Although it was first documented in 1938 by the Western researcher Eric Schroeder, the minaret was not surveyed until 1952 and is not described in any of the classic travel books on Afghanistan, not even in Nancy Hatch Dupree's comprehensive 1977 guide. The only web reference is on the site of a preservation organization Dupree founded in 1994, the Society for the Preservation of Afghan Cultural Heritage (SPACH).

The obscurity of the minaret is explained by the fact that, until recently, getting there from Balkh took three hours on an appalling road, enough to deter all but the most fanatic devotees of medieval Islamic architecture. It was only a year ago that a spanking new asphalt road reduced the travel time between Balkh and Daulatabad, 27.5 kilometers away, from more than two hours to 10 minutes.

A further half-hour over 14 kilometers of dirt road, winding around storybook mud brick Turkmen villages, brings you to Zadyan, the village that contains the minaret. The men and women who live in the surrounding villages still wear the striking national dress—pointed hats with headscarves for the women, vibrantly colored handwoven caps for the men and boys—and weave carpets for a living. If you don't look too hard, it can seem as though time stopped here when the minaret was built—around 1108-09, according to the *Archaeological Gazetteer of Afghanistan*.

At 60 feet the minaret is squat; taller, its proportions would have been perfect. Today its beauty is in the astonishingly well-preserved bands of geometric decoration that wind all the way up, and the subtleties of the fine brickwork. Reza pointed out that the thick relief of the brickwork provides ample footholds for climbers; local kids occasionally scale the tower and, he said, some have fallen to their deaths in the attempt.

Ann Marlowe has been published frequently on various aspects of Afghanistan in the course of eleven trips there.

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The minaret ends abruptly just above the second of two Arabic inscriptions. Reza transcribed the splendid but baffling Kufic into modern Arabic script I could read with some help:

> In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate, Oh you believing people, called by the azan on the day of Friday, try to pray to God. The building of this minaret the great ruler the trusted by the government and honor of the community, Abu Jafar Mohammed Ibn-Ali. . . .

The inscription trails off into fragments.

A steady trickle of Afghan pilgrims visited the minaret while we were there—spillover from a mysterious shrine a hundred feet away, known as Hazrat Saleh, or Honored Saleh. The building doesn't look ancient, and the legend of the obscure Islamic prophet Saleh to which it refers is also associated—with much more probability—with a 2,000-year-old Arabian site, Maidan Saleh. (Saleh was a prophet sent by Allah to the Arabs before Mohammad.) Reza pointed out that the green-draped tomb of Saleh inside the shrine is facing east, while Islamic graves are customarily arranged so that the deceased face Mecca, which is west of Afghanistan. He thinks this indicates the pre-Islamic origins of the site. Another oddity: On the outside of the shrine is an arched niche where pilgrims have left pats of mud in the hope of a cure for skin ailments.

While locals make pilgrimages to Hazrat Saleh and the minaret, there were no other foreigners around. In fact, the only foreigners I have ever seen at ancient sites in Afghanistan are the archaeologists working there. Mainly because of misapprehensions about security, the astonishing historical and archaeological riches of Afghanistan are nearly unvisited. Prehistoric petroglyphs, Achaemenid citadels, Buddhist *stupas* and monasteries, Greco-Bactrian and Kushan sites with Hellenistic columns and fire altars, and a thousand years of Islamic architecture jostle for space, and many can be seen just off the main roads. Potential visitors lump the area around Balkh and the whole Afghan north, which are as safe as dozens of other developing countries, with the war zones of Helmand and Kandahar.

While most foreigners bemoan the loss of the Bamiyan buddhas—for the record, Robert Byron thought neither had any artistic value—the surprising good news is that the losses due to the years of war will probably be dwarfed by the treasures still undiscovered.

A handful of recent finds suggest that the best is yet to come. Two hours and 150 kilometers from Mazar towards Kabul at Pul-i-Khumri, the British scholar Jonathan Lee has just documented what is now Afghanistan's largest sculpture, the 6.5-by-4.9 meter relief known to locals as Rag-i-bibi, or Lady Fatima's Vein. This is an 1,800-year-old Sassanian rock relief mysteriously located 1,600 kilometers east of its nearest counterparts. He believes another, last described by a French traveler in 1857, awaits rediscovery.

In Balkh, the archaeologists at the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA) have spent the last four years unearthing hundreds of Greek and Buddhist building fragments, and as recently as last year they identified the largest known Achaemenid city in Afghanistan—three square kilometers—an hour further south at a city that may be the site of the legendary marriage of Alexander and Roxana at Tangi Cheshmeh Shafa, "the gorge of the healing spring."

Meanwhile, in the far southwest of Afghanistan, the desert province of Nimroz holds miles of ruins last systematically explored by the Smithsonian Institution in the 1970s. That team excavated only a dozen or so of more than 150 sites; the sole surviving member, William Trousdale, now approaching 80, hopes to publish their notes as a tribute to his late colleagues. The Sistan basin would be a tourist attraction anywhere else, but even most Afghans have never heard of it.

The pattern of discovery in Afghanistan suggests that these archaeologists have just scraped the surface of what is there. "What's amazing," says Jonathan Lee, an archaeologist with long experience in Afghanistan, "is that most of the discoveries have been within a few hundred yards of the roads, and there aren't many roads in Afghanistan."

The bad news is that Afghanistan's archaeological heritage is being looted by Afghans and their foreign accomplices, while the international organization with the greatest potential to save these treasures, UNESCO, stands by, spending donor money on endless conferences and studies. The Afghan government officials responsible for archaeology range from well-meaning to corrupt, but even the best are handicapped by the limitations of an archaeology police of just 350 men and four cars.

Last November I asked Brendan Cassar and Masanori Nagaoka, the two men who make up UNESCO's international staff in Kabul, why UNESCO wasn't paying for watchmen for major sites. "We don't have the money to guard all the sites," Cassar answered. Like Nagaoka, he is an elegantly turned-out man who looks more like a Wall Street banker than an M.A. in historic preservation working in dusty Kabul.

I suggested a program of targeted donations, whereby people could spend $1,000 or $2,000 a year to protect a specific site. "But that wouldn't be developing capacity in the Afghan government," Cassar replied, dunking a freshly made spring roll into a dipping sauce. We were eating—at the UNESCO team's suggestion—at Kabul's only five star hotel, the Serena. "We work with the Afghan government. We want to build capacity."

His answer didn't surprise me. "Building capacity" has to be the most common phrase in the lexicon of aid workers in Afghanistan. It can mean anything from an excellent training program to doing nothing. I responded that it would take 20 years to train a new generation of Afghan preservationists, and by then all these sites will be destroyed.

I might have anticipated this unfulfilling encounter had I read between the lines of UNESCO's description of its work in Afghanistan:

> The project to safeguard the Bamiyan site is a further example of cooperation between Afghanistan and UNESCO. It has allowed monuments to be consolidated and dated. Furthermore, the restoration of the Kabul Museum was made possible through the support

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of numerous governments and international organizations. Afghanistan joined UNESCO on May 4, 1948. The country serves as an example in the fight against illiteracy. Several projects have been implemented jointly with UNESCO such as the LAND AFGHAN project (2002-2005), which aims to promote literacy and non-formal education. Gender parity in education and in the media as well as the development of the University of Kabul are the current priorities of cooperation between UNESCO and Afghanistan.

Gender parity in education and the media? Worthy goals indeed, but served by numerous education-oriented NGOs and governmental organizations working in Afghanistan. Afghanistan: an example of the fight against illiteracy, with one of the world's highest illiteracy rates? Amidst the picnic spots and conferences, an important aspect of UNESCO's mandate—as stated in its constitution, "assuring the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science, and recommending to the nations concerned the necessary international conventions"—seems to have gotten lost.

It's hard to find anyone in preservation or archaeology in Afghanistan with a good word for UNESCO, which has antagonized smaller groups by competing with them for the same scarce donor funds, winning contracts, and then banking the money while doing nothing—unless you count lavish dining-out. UNESCO efforts in Afghanistan have concentrated on two World Heritage Sites, Bamiyan and the Minaret of Jam. Roland Besenval of DAFA explains that UNESCO has never asked DAFA about potential sites for conservation and ignored DAFA's request to protect Afghanistan's oldest mosque, the 8th-9th century No Gonbad, an hour away from the Minaret of Daulatabad.

In 2007 UNESCO withdrew support from a Cambridge archaeology team that was doing promising work at Jam.

"We have shared our data with UNESCO and other interested parties, but never received anything in return," team member David Thomas explains from Australia, where he teaches at La Trobe University. "We are excluded from the Expert Working Group meetings on Jam, despite being the only archaeological project to have worked at the site since the French in the early 1960s."

A third site nominated for UNESCO World Heritage status, the magnificent old city of Herat, was in danger of falling off the list from sheer inaction until the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's country officer, Jolyon Leslie, raised the issue. The Aga Khan Foundation has been documenting the state of the antiquities of Herat.

"UNESCO spent only a couple of days in Herat," Leslie explains. "I wanted them to take the time to look in detail at what needed to be done. You can't see what you need to see in the time they spent." The "restoration" of the National Museum—incorrectly called the Kabul Museum on UNESCO's website—has meant the refurbishment of a half-empty building, with one room of artifacts from Nuristan and perhaps a hundred items from the archaeological collection on view. (And at that, much of the work was overseen by SPACH, the roof was restored by the U.S. government, and the Nuristan room was paid for by an Austrian expert, Max Klimburg.)

The excuse for the paucity of exhibits is that the museum doesn't have the security system to show more valuable parts of its collection—including the Bactrian gold on view in the marvelous traveling exhibit that left Washington's National Gallery of Art last September and moved to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. It is now on view at Houston's Museum of Fine Arts.

The problem isn't lack of donor funds: $350,000 donated by the Greek government to UNESCO for the National Museum, which could have paid for a security system, is being used to create what Jonathan Lee sardonically refers to as a "pastiche Moghul Garden" behind the Museum.

When I met with Omar Khan Massoudi, the genial director of the National Museum, the strategy behind this baffling choice became clearer. The Afghan government plans to relocate the National Museum to a more central location, in a much larger building designed to be a museum. If the Museum can come up with $3.5 million to purchase the land from the Kabul municipality, the plans will go forward. It is likely that they will, since the Afghan government has already received $800,000 as its share of the ticket revenue from the Bactrian gold exhibit—in a dedicated account for cultural activities. Roland Besenval estimates that 30 percent to 40 percent of the ticket price of the Musée Guimet's show of the gold went to the Afghan account; with some luck, it will actually go to a worthy purpose.

Massoudi explains that the current building was the former Kabul Town Hall; it has drainage problems and old-fashioned windows that allow dust to enter. He couldn't give me a good reason for spending a large chunk of donor money to put a garden around a building that soon won't even be a museum, but it's also true that there's no point in putting a security system in a building that soon won't be a museum. Massoudi, who is a passionate advocate of educating Afghans about their heritage, is pessimistic on the practicality of exhibiting the Bactrian gold in Kabul anytime soon, even with a modern security system. The problem is the failure of the Karzai government to make Kabul free of the threat of terrorist attacks. (On a happier note, since last fall the museum has been open on Fridays, the only day off for most Afghans, which has increased attendance significantly.)

Ana Rodriguez, the volunteer head of SPACH who catalogued the holdings of the National Museum, is a staunch supporter of Massoudi, who was one of the museum employees who hid the Bactrian gold during the civil war years. "He has a plan," she explains, "but it isn't articulated in the way foreigners want."

But she drew my attention to the laughable *tawildar* system at the museum. Together with the absence of a security system, this ancient practice, which allocates a certain number of objects to the charge of an individual who has keys to the area where they

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are stored, is why only a fraction of the museum's holdings are on exhibit. The individual responsible for a set of objects may know nothing about them; *tawildars* aren't curators. But because it's their skin if objects are lost or damaged, they are reluctant—crazily reluctant, from the viewpoint of foreign researchers—to make objects available for expert study, much less exhibition.

Massoudi hopes foreign museums will eventually lend works to the new, secure National Museum. So far, the only show of overseas art has been a poorly mounted exhibit of the work of six obscure German photographers that left Afghan visitors baffled. (It turns out that the German government trained six Afghan photographers in Germany so, lo and behold, six German photographers' works were sent here. But as Massoudi says, "Anything is better than an empty room.")

From the beginning of European engagement with Afghanistan, many archaeological discoveries here have been fortuitous and accomplished by independent scholars or inspired amateurs: Ai Khanum, the Minaret of Jam, No Gonbad. The most recent major find, the Rag-i-Bibi relief, was brought to the world's attention by one of the former, an extraordinary British explorer and historian, the 57-year-old Jonathan Lee.

Lee has been working in Afghanistan whenever possible for the last 30 years, closely associated with the British Academy-funded Learned Societies and the Royal Asiatic Society. Although he received his university degree in 1972, Lee could not afford to return to get his doctorate for many years, receiving it in 1999. In the intervening years he funded much of his exploration himself, supporting his archaeology work by consulting in Afghanistan, leading tours to the former Soviet Central Asian countries, selling his photographs to stock footage companies, and teaching high school.

Among other achievements, Lee has also found an important Sassanian fresco in a cave and the remains of a Seljuk shrine; rediscovered an important 2nd-century A.D. Bactrian inscription lost during the years of war; and retrieved another important Bactrian inscription from western Bamiyan from the hands of a commander now high up in the Afghan government.

In December 2002 Lee addressed a conference on Afghanistan at the British Museum. He told me: "An Afghan journalist, Najibullah Razaq, who was in the audience, later approached me and showed me video footage of the site which he and a BBC correspondent had visited earlier in 2002." In December 2003 Lee briefly visited the site, near a Pashtun village called Shamarq, in the middle of a snowstorm. In May 2004 he mounted a joint SPACH-DAFA expedition with the eminent French Central Asian specialist Franz Grenet. Life-sized photos of the relief were taken from elaborate scaffolding, permitting further study off-site.

Minaret-i-Zadyan

REZA BALKH

Local officials in Baghlan province took an unusually active role in supporting the documentation and guarding the relief. UNESCO was not so cooperative.

"In 2004," Lee says, "the provincial official responsible for the protection of historic monuments in Baghlan informed UNESCO of its presence during a conference in Kabul, but no one was asked to make a survey or a proper recording. Had it not been for Najibullah attending a conference in the British Museum later in the same year and showing me his video, the site would still probably not have been on the national, and world, archaeological map."

Today Rag-i-Bibi is one of the few Afghan archaeological sites protected by the government. It's guarded by a couple of teenaged archaeology police who have rifles but no telephones and, for that matter, little more than the clothes on their backs. Their $70 monthly salary doesn't go far, even in Afghanistan—but at least the site is protected.

Rag-i-Bibi is powerful and intriguing, but elusive both in terms of its location (high up on a cliff face far from any signs of settlement) and its purpose and symbolism. We see a horse but only the legs of his rider; background figures in low relief are the only human figures surviving. Lee and Grenet identify them as Sassanid courtiers and defeated Kushans, occupying the usual role in Sassanian reliefs of conquered peoples. Two *phalerae* (round metal discs used on both human armor and horse trappings in antiquity, with heraldic significance in ancient Iran) suggest the high status of the rider. And two rhinos—one being chased, one under the horse's hooves—suggest the centrality of the hunt in this lost world. Lee points out that the reason the torso and upper body of the rider hasn't survived is that these parts would likely have been clay add-ons, more fragile than stone. The same explains the disappearance of the rhinoceros's horns: "You can see the holes where the horn of the rhino was."

According to Grenet, the sculpture depicts the Sassanid king Shapur I (240-272 A.D.), who had other similar reliefs made in the last years of his reign. This one would have celebrated his victory and subjugation of the Kushan kings of the region. Yet this sculpture is 1,600 kilometers east of the other known examples. It shows the hunt of an Indian rhinoceros—an animal never found in Afghanistan but royal prey in India—and a mango tree,

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also native to India. Grenet believes these motifs are the result of Shapur's pretensions that his rule extended to India, which then began in Peshawar.

A few hours northwest, in Balkh, DAFA has been working in the spring and fall on sites a few hundred years older. Their excavations at Tepe Zargaran in Balkh are thrilling. A giant tumulus—the Persian *tepe* means hill, and the site's name means "hill of the gold-workers"—has been painstakingly opened up to reveal, in one area, the remains of buildings, and nearby, a massive collection of Bactrian and Buddhist stone building fragments, evidently used in an ancient irrigation channel.

Philippe Marquis of DAFA, on-site when I visited, tells me that the first dig is from the 3rd century A.D. or later, but has not yet been conclusively identified. At the second site, the graceful top of a broken Corinthian column had just been unearthed; a very similar piece is currently in the traveling show of treasures from the Afghan National Museum. Nearby, the stone fragments recovered from the site have been divided into two collections. The upper layer of digging revealed about 450 pieces in all, of which half were originally part of Buddhist buildings from the 2nd century.

Marquis explains that they probably came from a couple of *stupas* destroyed by the Sassanid builders of the irrigation channel. Excavations lower down yielded Greek pieces from the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. The DAFA team will try to reconstruct the *stupas* from the pieces they have. The finds from the excavation will go into a 1,200 square-meter museum the French are funding in Mazar, the first of several projected regional museums the Afghan government is trying to finance. Designed by a French architect to echo local domed forms, the plans for the museum suggest that it will be Afghanistan's finest to date. It is projected to open in 2011.

Lee believes that there is more to find: "The most famous site yet to be discovered in the Balkh area is the temple of Zar-i Aspa (Golden Horse) dedicated to the Iranian goddess Anahita," he says. "Greek sources record this temple, dedicated to the guardian spirit of the Oxus, actually straddled a part of the Balkh river."

DAFA's most important recent discovery, Tangi Cheshmeh Shafa, lies along this river 30 kilometers south of Balkh. Much of the way is on a dirt road used by locals that runs alongside the Balkh River, but it is still only an hour from Mazar, allowing the DAFA team to commute from their Mazar home. Tangi Cheshmeh Shafa has yielded Afghanistan's largest aAchaemenid site to date, about three kilometers square, dating to 500-600 B.C.

The situation of the former citadel is spectacular, affording wide-angle views of the countryside. David Jurie

First-century Buddhist statue from Balkh

at DAFA's Kabul office explains the likely reason the Achaemenids built here: "From the top of the citadel, you can see 25 kilometers on either side. The road to Bamiyan and India passes by and it is very narrow at this point. So if you controlled this site, you could dominate the trade route."

For this reason it was also used as a fort by the mujahedeen during Afghanistan's civil war, and they are likely responsible for the extensive looting of the hillside site. Acres of the slope are pitted by crude diggings to a depth of four to five feet. But on a flat plain below, another part of the site awaits professional excavation.

Just a half hour's drive from Tepe Zargaran and an hour from the Minaret of Daulatabad, Afghanistan's oldest mosque, the 8th-9th century No Gonbad ("Nine domes") stands in tranquil farmland. Yet this masterpiece, one of the oldest mosques west of Iraq, was only published in 1968, after two Americans, Lisa Golombek (now curator emeritus of Islamic Art at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto) and photographer Deborah Klimburg-Salter (wife of the expert who refurbished the Nuristani collections at the Kabul Museum) stumbled upon it. It is also known as Haji Piyada, or Saint Piyada, after a much more recent shrine located next to the ruined mosque.

Powerful even without its roof, the mosque is imposing in a way that the more human-scaled minaret of Daulatabad is not. The pillars' stucco decoration has the sublime confidence of early Islamic art. Golombek points out the similarities between the vegetal and geometric forms used here and in other nine-bay 9th- and 10th-century mosques across the Middle East and North Africa.

Although one of the mosque's arches is in danger, it seems likely that DAFA's major program for the site will rescue it in time. They are digging down 1.75 meters to the original floor, now covered by dust and masonry from the collapsed roof. DAFA hopes to rebuild the roof from these fragments.

The ruins that offer the most extreme combination of visual drama and remoteness are 600 miles away by road in Nimroz. This province, in the far southwest between the Baluch areas of Pakistan and Iran, is closer by air to Dubai than to Kabul, and its capital, Zaranj, is so close to the Iranian border that locals use Iranian currency and women wear the Iranian black chador.

There is no NATO military presence or Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) here, and the security situation is iffy because most of the province is uninhabited. The ruins here are the remains of a once-thriving civilization that extended from Kandahar well into Iran and went by the name of Sistan for most of its history. They lie in a 70-mile-wide, 100-mile-long desert basin periodically flooded by the Helmand River. Two-thirds of the area is within

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Nimroz Province but the rest is now in Iran. Some of these places have been inhabited since prehistoric times.

A 30-year-old description by Nancy Hatch Dupree, doyenne of Afghan architecture, whets the appetite:

> The southern Hamun basin contains the greatest assemblage of 15th century A.D. architecture anywhere in the Middle East. . . . The remains speak of a sophisticated culture, of affluence permitting a rich variety of architectural forms and ornamentation, of stately manor houses containing sometimes more than sixty rooms fashioned from sun-dried and kiln-baked bricks.

The reality is magnificent, but literally eroded. Here is one case where the hand of man is not at fault; wind and flood have done their work, and the buildings I saw were less detailed than the photographs I had seen from the early 20th century. The three-hour, 90-kilometer trip southeast from Zaranj to Shahr-i-Gholghola, "the city of screams," is the second-worst driving I've ever experienced in Afghanistan, offering innumerable opportunities for one's car to fall off the side of a mountain. It was a great relief when the first set of remains of Shahr-i-Gholghola appeared abruptly in front of us.

There were battlements behind battlements, three concentric rings, with 50 or 100 yards of open ground between them. The site is so large—a square kilometer—and the terrain so flat that it is difficult to keep perspective. The walls had once been 50 or 60 feet high—and in fact still are, but the lower 30-40 feet are now shrouded in sand. At some points you could walk up nearly to the top and then descend an equal slope to the next area of flat ground. In the center is a fantastic honeycomb of mud brick arches and domes, battlements and stairs, with smashed pottery everywhere.

The last serious study of Shahr-i-Gholghola ended abruptly in 1978 when the Smithsonian team that Trousdale led pulled out. Trousdale may be the last man alive to know the area well. He worked in Helmand and Nimroz provinces during 1971-78, excavating for three years at Shahr-i-Gholghola. The Smithsonian team surveyed more than 150 sites from the 4th millennium B.C. to the 15th century A.D. and excavated a dozen until the arrival of the Soviets made it impossible to work. Trousdale and a geologist also investigated early mining and smelting sites, both in Afghanistan and in Pakistani Baluchistan across the border.

When we met in London last winter Trousdale explained, with an intensity and quickness of mind that would have been intimidating in a much younger man, that there was much more detail to Shahr-i-Gholghola when he visited 30 years ago. But mingled with his sadness is a satisfaction few of us experience. He writes to me in an email:

> I cannot write a standard final report because our work was never finished, our finds scattered, our equipment burned and/or looted. Since the age of five I have always wanted to live and work in southwest Afghanistan, then, and perhaps still, one of the world's fascinating last unknowns. I made it to my dream in the nick of time. If it weren't for the other members of the expedition . . . to whom I owe so much, I might be content that I reached and lived my life's goal.

The last word should belong not to a scholar at the end of his career but to one at the beginning, my companion on the trip from Kabul to Balkh, Reza Hossaini.

"Do you see those mountains on the left side?" he asks, pointing to a rugged slope on the south side of the Kabul-Mazar highway, just after the Salang Tunnel that marks the beginning of the Central Asian plain. "I have found petroglyphs on the back side there. I walked 40 kilometers in one day to go there and back."

"How did you know they would be there?"

"I have some ideas from reading, and I ask the local people, I become friendly with them. Also I am using Google Earth."

Reza's passionate pursuit of learning—on a salary of $360 a month—bodes well for a new generation of Afghans to set their mark on the study of their own country. ♦

The Collectors

The consolation of art in the midst of destruction.

BY EDITH ALSTON

As a vision of post-World War II Paris at the moment the great city was beginning to right itself after four years of German occupation, *Pictures at an Exhibition* has the fine-grained feeling of photographs by Kertesz or Atget. But in a sparkling prewar prelude—to mix art and music in ways this writer does—it's the memories of a young Max Berenzon, as recollected by Max in late middle age, that render his picture of family ineradicable.

Pictures at an Exhibition
by Sara Houghteling
Knopf, 256 pp., $24.95

Edith Alston is a writer and editor in New York.

Born into the cultural aristocracy of Parisian art dealers of the 1920s, Max was the son of gallery owner Daniel Berenzon, renowned for his Modigliani-like elegance and expertise in 20th-century painting (he represented Picasso and Matisse). Max's beautiful mother, Eva, was a Polish-born concert pianist who "heard sharps in the opening and closing of my dresser drawers and an unpleasant A-flat when the telephone rang. She thanked Father for choosing an automobile whose motor played an excellent C."

If the aristocracy was a bit shallow—Max's grandfather made his fortune

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trading materials for the canvases of as-yet unknown artists in his paint shop—the adoring Max ranked his father among the great European collectors

> whose genius was not in the handling of paint itself, but in the handling of men who painted. They encouraged the artists' outrageous experiments so that they could paint without fear of financial ruin. . . . They were as devoted as monks to the beauty of their illuminated manuscripts. Or so my father said, in his most rhapsodic moments.

Beyond the rhapsody, Daniel had the connoisseur's coolly assessing eye. Among his paintings was only one, Manet's *Almonds*, that without ever admitting his love for it, he refused to sell. And to his son's deep disappointment, he had urged Max toward medical school, as not suited to the collector's career: "I lacked, he had said, the memory, the business acumen, the ruthlessness, and the lucidity of vision to predict what could be bought one spring and sold a dozen Junes hence."

In the family apartment housing the gallery, while Eva listened over the radio to the fall of her homeland to Hitler, Max was falling in love with Daniel's new assistant, Rose Clément. Paris hovered under the threat of German bombardment, with sandbags stockpiled inside the Louvre, when Max, eager to impress both Daniel and Rose, bid at auction on another Manet, but Rose recognized the work as a fake. Humiliated, Max gratefully saw his father shrug off his blunder as a valuable lesson, and one learned eventually by every connoisseur. But the best consolation came from Eva, in her awkward French, describing the origin of Mussorgsky's most famous musical composition, to make a case for the necessity of all art—good or bad, lost or remembered, original or derivative, even inauthentic.

In August 1944 the challenge of authenticity becomes a recurring theme when Daniel and Max reach Paris, with Eva left safe in the countryside and the Germans in retreat, and find their apartment fire-ravaged and stripped of all paintings and furnishings. Across Europe, wartime damage under the Third Reich in artwork alone is estimated today at some 100,000 works stolen, destroyed, or lost, some 40,000 of which have never been recovered—and the loss was greatest by far in France. Unfurling the scope of this depredation, *Pictures* narrows its lens down to the personal as Max sets out, leaving his badly demoralized father behind, to uncover what's left of the Parisian art world, looking also for Rose and his childhood friend Bernard, to recoup what he can of his own and his family's past.

Sara Houghteling

JONATHAN SPRAGUE

Houghteling writes with a spare grace, every scene supple and brisk, on this dark odyssey through a spiritually dimmed city, where refugees wait in long lines for ration cards, collaborators hide out in the Paris police force, and American soldiers haggle to sell valued possessions back to their original owners. Imagined characters mix with historical figures: Daniel is based on the fabled Parisian gallery owner Paul Rosenberg; René Huyghe, credited here with Daniel's hiring of Rose, was a distinguished curator at the Louvre; Bertrand was a scion of a great family of museum contributors lost in the concentration camps. Even Maurice Chevalier appears, to define a moment of moral ambiguity.

Skirting through a little Left Bank pornography on the way back to the heights of an art market soured by survival-level opportunism and greed, a chance find in a ratty bookshop has Daniel returned to the exercise of his critical powers, when Max finds Rose again, and learns some of the perversities of wartime looting:

> "It was with your collection that I understood how Goering had organized a new economy. It benefited Hitler first, Goering shortly thereafter and next the French art dealers. . . . The market was flooded with forgeries precisely because the Germans wanted this so-called Aryan art, from centuries past with no 'degeneracy' and no modernity. . . . No money changed hands. The Jews' art replaced the need for currency. Goering kept his two paintings, and the French dealer obtained twelve masterpieces that he would quickly sell. . . . Hitler's acquisitions are much easier for me to trace, since he insisted on 'paying' for his. He had a middle-class attitude toward finances."

Rose is based on the real-life Rose Valland, a curator at Paris's museum of modern works, the Jeu de Paume. Frumpy and single-minded, Valland worked virtually unnoticed under the noses of the Nazis throughout the war, documenting the huge volume of confiscated works that passed through the museum, and alerting the Resistance about trainloads of loot headed for Germany, keeping them out of range of Allied bombs.

If a poignant family secret linked to *Almonds* never quite gains traction against the density of the history embedded here, the story never loses the thread of its main intention: to calibrate the sustaining power of art, great or modest, among those who know it best and treasure it most, beyond every nuance of creative expression and centime of material worth—and the consolation in the memories of it when all else has been lost. And if the Rose of history never quite lived up to the glamour of Max's Rose, chalk it up to the memories of a young man in Paris seeing for the first time through the eyes of love. ♦

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Rich Rewards

He who pays the piper is getting his money's worth.

BY MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

For most of the 20th century, the big foundations operated on the premise that the best donors were those who would say little or nothing about how their wealth should be used. A magazine editor once impiously argued that the writers he liked were those who turned in their articles and then were hit by trucks. The heads of America's large philanthropies have treated their founders with the same disrespect.

Philanthrocapitalism
How the Rich Can Save the World
by Matthew Bishop and Michael Green
Bloomsbury, 298 pp., $27

In the past decade, donors have been fighting back, demanding far more of a say in how their wealth is used than their predecessors did. Matthew Bishop and Michael Green call this phenomenon "philanthrocapitalism," and this is a look at what today's donors are doing with the capital they have created.

Bishop, New York bureau chief for the *Economist*, and freelancer Green have done quite a lot of work. In their source notes they say they have interviewed 68 philanthropists, including "Bill Gates, Ted Turner, George Soros, Bono, Pierre Omidyar, Jeff Skoll, Sir Richard Branson, Angelina Jolie, Michael Bloomberg, David Rockefeller." The interview with Gates, in particular, appears to be extensive. They also cite a mountain of books and monographs—including, I must point out, two of my own books about philanthropy.

Philanthrocapitalism is an interesting look at how donors view the nonprofit world, but it has two substantial limitations. The first is that Bishop and Green report on what people talk about at "the elite global gatherings where philanthrocapitalists rub shoulders with politicians and other influential folks." But by viewing the charitable world from its commanding heights—the World Economic Forum in Davos, the Clinton Global Initiative, the Technology, Entertainment, and Design conference in Silicon Valley—they ignore the wider world where the grants are spent. The result is that we learn a great deal about what donors want to use their money for but very little about whether these gifts actually make the world better.

Second, Bishop and Green choose *not* to write about the older foundations. These older nonprofits remain calcified, stagnant agencies that employ reflexively liberal program officers. The authors correctly note that "the root cause of the ineffectiveness of many established foundations is that the donor is no longer around." But these older foundations—Ford, MacArthur, Kellogg—are still among America's largest, and to ignore them gives readers a distorted look at the nonprofit world.

Bishop and Green note three ways in which today's "philanthrocapitalists" differ from their predecessors. First, they tend to limit the number of causes they support. The older foundations, given no restrictions by their founders, tend to be organizations that give many small grants to nonprofits in the hope that a few of the grants might be effective. But this "spray and pray" technique has resulted in many nonprofits' remaining small organizations that scramble from grant to grant, and have no chance to grow. Thomas Tierney, who heads the philanthropic consulting firm Bridgespan, asks the authors: "How many social problems can be solved with $50,000? Over 18 months? Not many."

Today's donors have learned valuable lessons from the great conservative donors John M. Olin and Richard Mellon Scaife, who found that it is more effective to give large sums to a few organizations for a long period of time than to give small sums to many groups for short periods.

The philanthrocapitalists, even when they disagree with Olin or Scaife's politics, are following their example. Thus the giant Gates Foundation majors in public health and minors in school reform. Other donors have even more limited goals. Mo Ibrahim, a Sudanese telecommunications billionaire, has used his wealth to fund

Mo Ibrahim

the Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership, which gives $5 million and a $200,000 annual pension to any African leader who voluntarily leaves office when his term is up and who doesn't loot his country's treasury. The goal of the prize is to persuade African leaders to be more responsible than their predecessors.

Another goal of the donors surveyed here is to dim the bright line between for-profit and nonprofit enterprises. One problem nonprofits have is that, because they can't accumulate profits, they're unable to acquire the capital needed to ensure stable, steady growth.

So many charities created in the past decade aren't nonprofits but have mutated into something else.

Martin Morse Wooster is a senior fellow at the Capital Research Center and the author, most recently, of The Great Philanthropists and the Problem of 'Donor Intent.'

NEWSCOM

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Google.org, the philanthropic arm of Google, is deliberately designed so that sometimes it will act like a foundation in funding nonprofits and sometimes it will act like a venture capitalist in giving seed money to start-ups. Another hybrid is the Omidyar Network, created by eBay cofounder Pierre Omidyar, which melds a venture capital firm and a nonprofit. Omidyar says that he has created this form of giving because he is "pro-market, anti-big government, skeptical of traditional philanthropy."

And some people who would have run nonprofits in the past have decided that the market is the best way to help the poor. Bishop and Green report on the case of the Mexican social entrepreneurs Carlos Danel and Carlos Labarthe who wanted to help the poor of Mexico by providing small loans. Their nonprofit struggled until they reorganized it as a more traditional bank. Today, Compartamos Banco is a thriving bank which aids far more poor people than it would have as a cash-starved nonprofit.

While these innovative gestures toward the market by nonprofits should be encouraged, a more discouraging trend is the move by today's philanthropists towards left-wing political activism. While George Soros is the best-known example of this breed, Bishop and Green cite other examples as well. New York's mayor Michael Bloomberg has not only banned smoking but, as a philanthropist, has lavishly funded antismoking lobbyists around the world. The hard-core leftists Marion and Herbert Sandler have created ProPublica, which will provide "nonpartisan" investigative journalism to newspapers and magazines. ("It remains to be seen," Bishop and Green write, "if ProPublica will produce investigative pieces about the Democratic party, to which the Sandlers have been substantial donors.")

Of course, billionaires should be able to spend their money as they see fit. But wouldn't it be nice if someone pointed out to these liberal titans that spending large sums on the culture wars is not only a poor way to achieve the changes they desire, but could provoke their conservative counterparts to open their checkbooks to fund counterattacks? ♦

He Said What?

The quotable and the laughable. **BY EDWARD SHORT**

Fans of truly funny writing, the sort that makes you laugh out loud, will naturally look askance at *The Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations*.

After all, to quote Samuel Johnson, "Nothing is more hopeless than a scheme of merriment." Yet there are some genuinely funny things in this collection. There is this from Peter O'Toole, drawling in that Anglo-Irish lilt of his: "The only exercise I take is walking behind the coffins of friends who took exercise." And this from Christopher Fry, who wrote all those forgotten verse plays in the 1940s: "After the age of 80, you seem to be having breakfast every five minutes." Or this from Voltaire, on being asked to renounce the devil on his deathbed: "This is no time for making new enemies." Or this from Saki: "People may say what they like about the decay of Christianity; the religious system that produced green Chartreuse can never really die." Or this, one of my own favorites, from Joan Collins: "I've never yet met a man who could look after me. I don't need a husband. What I need is a wife."

The Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations
edited by Ned Sherrin
Oxford, 576 pp., $45

Little Oxford Dictionary of Quotations
edited by Susan Ratcliffe
Oxford, 496 pp., $15.95

But most of the entries here incline to the humorous rather than the funny. For example, there is this from the late Queen Mum, after her daughter had accepted a second glass of wine at lunch: "Do you think it's wise, darling? You know you've got to rule this afternoon." Or this from Alan Bennett's play, *The Madness of King George III*: "The asylums of this country are full of the sound of mind disinherited by the out of pocket." Or this from John Kenneth Galbraith: "Meetings are a great trap. However, they are indispensable when you don't want to do anything"—surely an observation which anyone familiar with the insides of conference rooms can corroborate.

There are a number of arresting *bon mots* from novelists. Edgar Wallace, the crime novelist, gets his own back at those who might have regarded him as *infra dig*: "What is a highbrow? He is a man who has found something more interesting than women." The English novelist Rose Macaulay gives advice that too many Britons and Americans probably do not need: "You should always believe all you read in newspapers, as this makes them more interesting." The Anglo-Irish novelist Elizabeth Bowen reminds the Irish of their blessings: "Where would the Irish be without someone to be Irish at?"

The Irish are not the only people who could benefit from this resourceful book. Hard-pressed reviewers, especially those asked to review books with any learned content, will know intimately the truth of Winston Churchill's observation that "it is a good thing for an uneducated man to read books of quotations." Not especially inspired after-dinner speakers will be grateful for the book's scintillating epigrams, though Dan Quayle managed well enough without any help from quotations when he mused before the United Negro College Fund: "What a waste it is to lose one's mind, or not to have a mind. How true that is." (For those who may have forgotten, the motto of the fund is "A mind is a terrible thing to waste.") Students will also want to ransack this book. As Dorothy Sayers once confessed: "I have a quote for everything—it saves original thinking."

Edward Short is a writer in New York.

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Attorneys, especially those condemned to argue before implacable judges, will enjoy the aplomb of F.E. Smith, one of Churchill's boon companions.

> JUDGE: I have read your case, Mr. Smith, and I am no wiser now than I was when I started.
>
> SMITH: Possibly not, My Lord, but far better informed.

Moralists will find edifying swag throughout the dictionary, especially this from H.L. Mencken: "Injustice is relatively easy to bear; what stings is justice." Poets worried whether their work has any relation whatever to the real world will be consoled to hear Philip Larkin admitting to Barbara Pym: "The notion of expressing sentiments in short lines having similar sounds at their ends seems as remote as mangoes on the moon." Those, however, worried about actually reaching an audience may want to skip over what the old *New York Sun* columnist Don Marquis had to say on the subject: "Writing a book of poetry is like dropping a rose petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo."

Journalists will be amused to hear what Craig Brown, who took over Auberon Waugh's column for the *Daily Telegraph*, makes of their profession: "Journalism could be described as turning one's enemies into money." Since Brown's enemies have included Bill Clinton, Jackie Collins, and Harold Pinter, he has never been without the means for handsome remuneration. Those in law enforcement will find G.K. Chesterton's take on other enterprising members of the community interesting: "Thieves respect property," Chesterton insisted. "They merely wish the property to become their property so that they may more perfectly respect it."

Ned Sherrin, the late BBC broadcaster and raconteur who died in 2007 after 20 years on the radio, organized his dictionary around alphabetized topics. The aristocracy, birds, crime, debt, epitaphs, fame, golf, God, humility, intellectuals, journalism, lies, management, old age, punishment, taxes, the universe, wealth, and wine are just a few of the topics the dictionary covers.

Say you are an atheist scheduled to speak before a group of evangelicals. You look for the topic *God* and—*voilà*, here is your opener, compliments of Clarence Darrow: "I don't believe in God because I don't believe in Mother Goose." Or you are a convicted inside-trader and need small talk for your first day in the jug. Go to *Wealth* and help yourself to this from George Best, the sybaritic footballer: "People say I wasted my money. I say 90 percent went on women, fast cars, and booze. The rest I wasted." Or you are an overworked psychiatrist on

'Injustice is relatively easy to bear; what stings is justice.' —H.L. Mencken

LEONARD MCCOMBE / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

a psychiatric ward full of people intent on doing away with themselves. What can you say to these desperate people to make them reconsider? Go to *Hope and Despair* and borrow this from Earl Wilson, the gossip columnist: "If you think nobody cares if you're alive, try missing a couple of car payments." Or you are out on the town and your wife interrupts the festivities by telling you that you are making an ass of yourself. If you consulted this dictionary before going out, you would have Dean Martin ready at hand to silence the censorious woman: "You're not drunk if you can lie on the floor without holding on."

The Little Oxford Dictionary of Quotations is ideal for those who might want to have their quotes in a more portable format. Small enough to carry in a coat pocket, it nonetheless contains over 400 pages of practical wit and wisdom. Susan Ratcliffe, a discriminating editor, includes topics that Sherrin omits, including *Manners*, which yields some instructive gems. Any woman, for example, who has ever found herself tongue-tied in the society of her social superiors will be grateful to Lewis Carroll for dispensing this helpful advice: "Curtsey while you're thinking what to say. It saves time." Or this from William Hazlitt: "The art of pleasing consists in being pleased." Or this from Evelyn Waugh, whose own manners were not always the most emollient: "Manners are especially the need of the plain. The pretty can get away with anything." Under *Housework* she quotes something from St. Teresa of Avila that may not have occurred to many scullery maids down through the centuries: "God walks among the pots and pans."

Ratcliffe provides many quotations that illuminate public life. Here, for example, is a line from Churchill describing what we ought to expect from our politicians: "It is the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month, and next year. And the ability afterwards to explain why it didn't happen." Something Gerald Ford once said should give pause to anyone angling for a bailout: "If the Government is big enough to give you everything you want, it is big enough to take away everything you have." Joseph Biden will appreciate John Adams's assessment of the vice presidency: "My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived." He may also appreciate this from Lord Birkett, one of England's most voluble advocates, who loved haranguing captive juries: "I do not object to people looking at their watches when I am speaking," he told a festive gathering. "But I strongly object when they start shaking them to make certain that they are still going." And here is something to give comfort to those who may not exult in the Age of Obama: "I know no method to secure the repeal of bad or obnoxious laws so effective," Ulysses S. Grant observed, "as their stringent execution." ♦

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Roman Holiday

Short shrift for Fascists on the wide screen.

BY JOE QUEENAN

These have been heady times for fans of motion pictures about overbearing totalitarians.

Recently in cinemas nationwide was *Defiance*, Edward Zwick's uplifting movie about Jewish partisans battling the Nazis in Belorussia during World War II. Simultaneously, *The Reader*, an oddly compassionate film about a concentration camp guard who allows 300 inmates to burn alive, won Kate Winslet an Academy Award. Nicely sandwiched between them was *Valkyrie*, a Yuletide 2008 release about a group of conscience-stricken German officers who belatedly realize that Adolf Hitler is making life miserable for everyone in the civilized world and really just has to go. Throw into the mix the recent *Good*, a lugubrious Viggo Mortensen affair about a scholarly euthanasia buff who falls in with the wrong crowd in Weimar Germany, and it's safe to say that no one in Hollywood is stinting on Nazi themes these days.

Were murderous henchmen of *Der Führer* the only implacable enemies of mankind to get treated to the full onscreen treatment, one might argue that no clear artistic or thematic trend can yet be discerned here. But this is not the case. The beloved psychopath Che Guevara is front-and-center in Steven Soderbergh's two-part epic *Che*, which portrays the feisty, cigar-chomping Cuban revolutionary less as a cunning revolutionary than as an aging matinee idol. Meanwhile, the monsters responsible for the Empire of the Sun have gotten taken to the woodshed in films as varied as Clint Eastwood's *Letters from Iwo Jima*, James Ivory's *The White Countess*, and Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*. And then, coming straight out of left field, the Christian Phalangists of Lebanon got raked right over the coals in the highly regarded animated film *Waltz with Bashir*, which was up for an Oscar this year.

The fact is, totalitarians of all stripes have been taking it on the chin from filmmakers for several years. East German communists got taken to task in *The Lives of Others*, a gripping motion picture that won the 2006 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. That same year, *Pan's Labyrinth* exposed Franco's Falangists for the pitiless scum they were, just in case anyone had forgotten. *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*, a touching art-house film, laid bare the villainous anti-intellectualism of the Communist party during the Cultural Revolution. Add to that *The Motorcycle Diaries*, *The Good German*, *Before Night Falls*, *Downfall*, *The Pianist*, *Jakob the Liar*, and a host of others, and it is clear that the film industry has not been lying down on the job when it comes to addressing the vexing issue of totalitarianism. Even, as in the case of *Che*, when it gets the story a teensy-weensy bit wrong.

And yet, in all this, there is one disturbing note. Where, amidst all these top-flight films about Reds, Nazis, and Falangists, are the movies about Mussolini's *fascisti*? For those of us who grew up being electrified by Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City*, Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Conformist*, and Vittorio De Sica's *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, it is depressing and deflating to see how cavalierly the Italian Fascists have been snubbed in recent times by the powers-that-be.

Where the depredations of Il Duce and his crew were once on full display in films like Bertolucci's *1900*, the Taviani Brothers' *Night of the Shooting Stars*, and Federico Fellini's *Amarcord*, and where the dark cloud of Italian Fascism hovered over a group of whacky British ex-pats in Franco Zeffirelli's 1999 *Tea With Mussolini*, Il Duce and the boys have been ignored in recent cinema. Even *La Vita è Bella*, the heartwarming 1997 film which both opened and closed the career of the rambunctious Roberto Benigni in this country, gave short shrift to the *fascisti*, preferring to concentrate on the high-handed concentration camp tactics of the Nazis, as if the Italians were not also responsible for the murder of Italian Jewry.

To those of us who revel in films about the Italian Fascists—a group sometimes referred to as *fascistifilmenphiles*—the freezing-out of this important segment of the totalitarian community is both perplexing and disheartening. It's not as if the Fascists didn't provide adequate visuals—those snappy black shirts, those Old School Roman Empire salutes, Il Duce's tassled headgear, not to mention his hung-by-the-heels exit—would all seem to make a natural fit for filmmakers everywhere. And since a chippy neofascist movement is alive and well in Italy today, it is not as if Mussolini's legacy is no longer relevant to our times.

Why, then, have the once ubiquitous Fascists been dispatched to the sidelines? Obviously, it didn't help that the Italians never had a Leni Riefenstahl to commit their story to memory. It might also have helped if the Fascists had had a proper air force and participated in the Battle of Britain. They also make crummy subjects for action films because they never won any battles. And because of Hitler's decision to bail out Mussolini during his comical invasion of Greece in 1940, the German invasion of Russia was delayed by weeks, very possibly costing the Thousand Year Reich the war. So there are probably still some bruised feelings about that in certain sectors of the German film industry.

All that said, the deliberate snubbing of Mussolini & Co. does a great disservice to our children. Since kids never learn anything except by watching movies, and since there have been

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no recent big-budget movies about the inept but peppery Fascists, Il Duce and the boys run the risk of fading out of the pages of history completely. Just as the Jutes got upstaged by the Huns, and the Tatars have historically had to play second fiddle to the Mongols, the Fascists are now in danger of becoming as cinematically obscure and irrelevant as the Picts, the Alani, and various other remorseless enemies of mankind.

And frankly, that's just not right. ♦

Quality of Stardom

Too many celebrities, not enough glamour.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

"There aren't any big stars anymore," said the doyenne of the gossip business, Liz Smith, in a recent interview. "It's very diminished in quality, I guess is what I'd say, the quality of stardom. Because I don't know who most of those people are. I'm not kidding! I read Page Six mystified every day, and everybody I talk to agrees with me. They don't know who anybody is."

To be sure, what with Iran getting the bomb and all, the declining "quality of stardom" is not an issue of great moment. But there is something interesting, as a matter of cultural sociology, in Liz Smith's observation. There really are dozens of stars of whom the majority of Americans has never heard. Let me mention just two: Lauren Conrad and Jason Mesnick. They sell magazines, get sky-high television ratings, and are the objects of intense interest and concern.

So who on earth are they? Lauren Conrad has been, for five years, the star of a series of real-life soap operas broadcast on MTV (*Laguna Beach: The Real Orange County*, *The Hills*) in which America has watched her grow from an impassive blonde teenager into an impassive blonde twentysomething. She is so famous, in fact, that she is routinely referred to in the gossip mags simply as LC.

Jason Mesnick has only been a star for a few months, and will probably cease being one now: He was this year's title character on the reality show called *The Bachelor*, in which a man gets to choose from a menu of 25 women. Mesnick seemed like such a nice fellow, a divorced man with a three-year-old child; but then, having proposed to one girl, he turned around on television six weeks later and dumped her in favor of the second-place winner, whom America had watched him dump in favor of the new dumpee.

Lauren Conrad

NEWSCOM

The world may not long remember them, but little-noted Conrad and Mesnick are not. Having paid the cost of losing all dignity, privacy, and sense of proportion, they have been rewarded with fame beyond their wildest imaginings. And yet this country is so vast, and the menu of entertainment choices so various, that I would expect most readers of this article are only learning of them from me and will forget them as soon as they turn the page.

Liz Smith's lament, then, has a great deal to do with the fact that fame is simultaneously accelerating and growing more evanescent. That is due to the radically egalitarian turn in the nature and definition of stardom in America. Stars are no longer the assembly-line creations of what was once called the Hollywood "dream factory," people with carefully constructed images who were kept away from the public, scarce and elusive, in part to retain the mystery and inaccessibility that would cause millions to pay money just to catch a glimpse of them.

Performers are exhibitionists by nature, but it was the particular genius of the Hollywood machine that it controlled and limited the nature of that exhibitionism. The collapse of those controls has changed the nature of stardom in the United States, because now the key to stardom isn't the limitation of exhibitionism but the unleashing of it.

This is due, in part, to the explosion of celebrity-driven media. For years, there was only *People* and its distant rival, *Us Weekly*; now there are dozens of weeklies and monthlies dedicated almost exclusively to show business. *Entertainment Tonight* ruled the roost on television for a decade or more; now five shows daily compete for the same soft news.

The sad fact is that the older methods of celebrity manufacture no longer suffice. They did not produce enough material, a sufficient number of celebrities to feed this inexhaustible maw. The maw itself had to produce them, and the complete abandonment of personal modesty as a cultural value gave them the means, the motive, and the opportunity.

What Liz Smith is lamenting is the collapse of the artifice—the glamor that was, in large measure, an invention of a public-relations machine notable for its invisibility. Now there is no artifice. Celebrity and notoriety are indistinguishable, and the phenomenon of stardom, like so many other American institutions, has been delegitimized. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

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"After [British prime minister Gordon Brown] presented Obama with a pen holder crafted from the timbers of the 19th century British warship HMS President (whose sister ship, HMS Resolute, provided the wood for the Oval Office's desk), Obama offered up . . . 25 DVDs of American movie classics." —*New York* Daily News, *March 7, 2009*

Parody

lowed by darkness late.
Tomorrow: *The same.*
Details, Page **B8**

The Washington

NEXT-TO-LAST YEAR, No. 178 DC MD VA WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

Obama's G-8 Stocking Stuffers

World Leaders Showered With Gift Cards, Gloves, Dress Barn Sweater

By RICHARD LEIBY
Washington Post Staff Writer

LA MADDALENA, Sardinia — Russian president Dmitry Medvedev had a puzzled look on his face. "I have never heard of Popov vodka. Is it Russian?" he asked as he lifted the plastic jug, which retails for $10. President Barack Obama was beaming and told Mr. Medvedev that it made for an excellent mixer. (The bottle was accompanied by a six-pack of Tab.) Said Mr. Obama, "When comrades pop over, Popov."

The gesture of goodwill was but one of numerous gifts the president brought with him to the Group of Eight summit held on this balmy Mediterranean island. Despite some criticism over the 25 DVDs Mr. Obama had given British prime minister Gordon Brown earlier in the year, the president insisted that practicality is what is needed during the current economic crisis. "We need to send the people of the world a signal that we understand their fears and concerns," said the American president before presenting Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada a $50 gift certificate to Chili's. He also pointed out to Mr. Harper that there were, in fact, Chili's restaurants scattered throughout Canada, such as at the Calgary airport, Edmonton airport, and Banff.

Mike Matus

German chancellor Angela Merkel shows reporters her Dress Barn Woman sweater.

Taro Aso, the prime minister of Japan, received from Mr. Obama a $25 gift card to Barnes & Noble and was told by the president to get on the bookseller's e-mail list to receive further discounts. German chancellor Angela Merkel, meanwhile, managed to smile as Mr. Obama showed off an aquamarine wool sweater he found in a cardboard box at the back of a Dress Barn Woman store. "Go on, Angela, try it on," urged the president, as the chancellor pulled the sweater over her head in the 90 degree heat. In addition, Ms. Merkel received a pair of Isotoner gloves.

As for Gordon Brown, the prime minister received a six-month membership in Netflix—in the words of one Obama adviser, "to further his education in American cinema, one DVD at a time, one per month." And speaking of DVDs, Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi was given The Godfather, parts one and two. "Had I given him part three," said President Obama, "we might be at war." France's president Nicolas Sarkozy, on the other hand, received a lovely pen holder made from the timbers of the British warship HMS

See HICKORY FARMS, *A6, Col.1*

Charles Freeman To Join AIPAC

'Some of My Best Friends Really Are Jews'

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